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MEN OF CAPITAL.

BY

MRS. GORE,

AUTHORESS OF

"THE BANKER'S WIFE," "PEERS AND PARVENUS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE

MAN OF CAPITAL;

OR,

OLD FAMILIES AND NEW.

CHAPTER I.

England, bound in with the triumphant sea,
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,
With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds.

SHAKSPEARE.

"I shall be rather curious to know who has bought Deasmarsh," observed a middle-aged country lady to a middle-aged country gentleman, as they sat watching the decline of day, one summer evening, over the vast tract of landscape visible from the lofty windows of a sitting-room which, in defiance of the gentilities of modern parlance, and the pretensions of their family-seat, they chose

to call a parlour.—And both gentleman and lady, both landscape and the square ill-furnished chamber to which it afforded an almost unbounded view, were of so featureless and uninteresting an order, that there was some excuse for Mrs. Cromer's regarding as a somewhat important incident, the sale of a considerable farm situated in the same parish as their own dull mansion of Cromer Hall.

"It is a thousand pities but what one of old Smith's daughters could have kept it from going out of the family," added the Squire's lady, hoping to startle her husband from a reverie nearly approaching to a doze.—

"Old Smith's three daughters are married to London tradesmen, whose husbands are on the look-out for ready money,—not for a Northamptonshire farm,—" rejoined the Squire.—"It was always understood that, at the old man's death, the property would be sold.—These are not times when people in business can afford to sink any part of their

capital in land;—a losing game, God knows, in this part of the country!"—

The proverb tells us it is a rash thing to rouse a sleeping lion.—It is not *wise* to rouse a sleeping any thing—nor even a dozing one. Few people wake up in their most benign of tempers.

"At all events," persisted Mrs. Cromer, who did not seem aware of her danger—"it is much to be regretted that Deasmarsh could not be bought by some person belonging to the neighbourhood."—

"And why, pray?—In the first place, not a family hereabouts possesses the means of half such a purchase. The upshot price of Deasmarsh is fifteen thousand pounds!—Even if, by means of mortgage, the purchase had been effected by Farmer Richards, what would have become of the land, in the hands of people without loose money to lay out?—In old Smith's possession, it has gone to rack and ruin."—

"Let us hope, then, at least, that it will be bought by moneyed people," said Mrs. Cromer, turning to what she considered the safe side of the question.—"As your brother was saying the other day, my dear, when he wanted to stir you up into bidding for the property, it would be a great thing for the parish to get an active thriving man at Deasmarsh."

"A great thing for the parish?—Why couldn't he say, at once, a good thing for the parson?"—rejoined Mr. Cromer. "Jacob is the most selfish fellow in the world! Jacob is always thinking of number one!—Instead of wanting an active man at Deasmarsh, all he looked to in suggesting the purchase to me (when he knew I could just as easily buy in Belvoir Castle!) was to secure himself *against* having an independent man in the farm, who might make himself troublesome in the vestry, and thrust his finger into the parish pie!"—

"I really think Jacob wished you to en-

deavour to buy the land, because it is likely to go for a song," argued his wife.—" No competition is expected. In fact, it is more than likely to be bought in. In this out-of-the-way corner of the county, what is there to attract strangers?"

" Little enough, I admit. But depend upon it Jacob had no other object in pestering me about it, but to better his living. There he is, in clover, in his snug parsonage, within a few hundreds a year as well off as his elder brother! For *my* part, I often wish I'd been born a second son, and enjoyed the family living instead of the family estate, which entails endless plagues, and loses in value every year!"—

" Do not forget, however, that, as the eldest, the living reverts to your second son; whereas, Jacob must provide for those who come after him out of his income, or by insuring his life."—

" If he *have* laid by out of his income, why

"And so it does!" cried her brother-in-law, regardless of the impatient shrug of the shoulders with which the Squire habitually silenced the observations of his wife; "and unless I'm much mistaken, Ghrimes is the man who receives his rent! I have seen Ghrimes once or twice in the village, within the last few years; and I'm sure I don't know what else could bring him here."

"You conclude, then," was the surly rejoinder of his brother, "that Ghrimes's client is now the owner of Deasmarsh and Hutton's farm; and, in that case, the most considerable landed proprietor in Deaswold?"—

"I have a shrewd guess such will turn out to be the case!" rejoined his brother. "Provoking enough, considering what the Cromers have been in this parish, for more than three centuries past! However, *that* standing, John, no one can take from us; and as this cotton-spinning or stocking-weaving gentleman, or whatever he may happen to be, is

never likely to show his face here to oppress us with his wealth and consequence, we are perhaps better off than if Richards or some other farmer of these parts had made a stretch to accomplish the purchase."

The Squire, however, had been too long King in Thule to have much taste for abdicating even the shadow of his wooden sceptre. So far as the lofty spire of Deaswold was visible, he fancied that his sovereignty was acknowledged. The manor had been in his family ever since the cessation of the war of the Two Roses; and though to this dignity was attached an estate within some hundreds of two thousand a year, as the Cromers from sire to son were an unambitious generation, wasting nothing on a shallow pretence at London fashion, or speculations still more perilous, it had hitherto sufficed their utmost pretensions. The great square brick Hall which surveyed the country round from the top of a meagrely-wooded hill, through windows whose

white bordering gave them the staring look imparted to the human eye by flaxen eyelashes, still held up its head self-satisfied and unrivalled. If, by some rare chance, a traveller, wrecked upon the parish, demanded *whose* was that frightful place, the respectful manner in which the urchins on the road replied that it was "the Squire's," while their mothers tugged at their shoulder and amended the vague reply into "Squire Cromer's, if you please, sir," satisfied every inquiring mind, that, though Squire Cromer's house might be unsightly and his lands unpicturesque, he was a great man, after all. As indeed he was. At Deaswold the Squire was monarch of all he surveyed. His brother Jacob, reared in the ultra-conservative principles of the last century, which required the juniors of a family whose estates were entailed, to honour not only their father and mother, but their elder brother, paid far more respect to the Squire's authority than it deserved.

For that the Cromers were an unambitious generation resulted from the weakness rather than the strength of their minds. Too unintelligent to suggest improvement, either in themselves or their belongings, the extensive property attached to the Hall was farmed by the Squire precisely on the same principles it had been farmed by his grandsire. Of modern improvements in rural economy, he knew nothing, and took care not to improve his knowledge either by reading or observation; while, as to refurnishing or remodelling his house, nothing short of a fire would have driven him to so dire an extremity. It was an article of religion with him that every thing should remain in the state in which, at the marriage of his father, sixty years before, Cromer Hall had been fitted up in honour of the bride.

For some generations past, indeed, the family had maintained its consequence by the lucky limitation of its olive-branches. Whenever

these chanced to exceed the couple of sons to be maintained by farm and glebe, the pruning-hook of measles or hooping-cough was sure to reduce the family to the dimensions provided for by the wisdom of their ancestors; and as there was consequently no incentive to the Squire regnant to increase his means by the exercise of his wits for the benefit of younger children, the wits and estate were allowed to lie fallow together.

But with the uninteresting couple that now filled the throne of squirearchy, matters were different. In addition to two cubs rearing at Rugby, there were three daughters at school in the neighbourhood of London; the necessity of laying by fortunes for whom served at once to render their parents less hospitable than their predecessors, and dispose their neighbours to see as little as might be of so provident a couple.

This system of things, however, did not extend to the Rectory. Though the worthy

Jacob had a daughter to provide for by his economies, he saw no cause to render life a burthen because he was one day or other to lay it down. From the impulses of a genial nature rather than of a reasoning mind, he was disposed to extract enjoyment from whatever came in his way: the common gifts of Providence,—the ordinary companionships of life. Fine weather,—a pleasant walk,—a cheerful friend,—sufficed to make the warm-hearted parson thankful and content.

While something less than a mile divided the Hall from the Parsonage, leagues and leagues intervened between the dispositions of the two brothers; and though for many years past they had met daily, it was strange how little the temper of the one had rubbed off on the character of the other. The Squire had not gained an inch towards rendering his jovial junior either surly or sordid; and though Jacob's merry-mindedness *did* occasionally induce a transient expansion of spirit

on the part of the Squire and his wife, it was only to relapse into cheerlessness as soon as he quitted the Hall.

Absorbed by the interests of his farm, Mr. Cromer's face had always a careworn look; and when not occupied in directing his men or disputing with his tenants, he went moping about the country on an old bay mare, as dull and sullen as himself, as if unconscious that there existed a world to be cared for, or souls to be saved, beyond the bounds of the manor of Deaswold.

In the mind of such a man, considerable curiosity was necessarily excited by the transfer of so large a portion of the property bordering his own to hands unknown. From the tenants of Deasmill and another small farm included in the sale of Deasmarsh, he vainly endeavoured to learn more than that, for the short remainder of their leases, the rent was to be paid to 'Torney Ghrimes; but, with the tenant of Hutton's he was on such uneasy

terms, in consequence of game-preserving squabbles, as to be unable even to address himself to *him* for information touching the identity of the new landlord and the old. The Squire was forced, therefore, to chew the cud of his discontent at having lost so golden an opportunity, with all the aggravation of not knowing precisely upon whom to wreak his spite.

"I suppose, John, you've heard the news?" cried the Rector on meeting his brother one day, about a month afterwards, on his return from a trip to Northampton.

"What news do I *ever* hear!" was the peevish rejoinder of the Squire. "You, I presume, have seen Ghrimes, and discovered at last the name of your new parishioner?"—

"Better than that!—a plaguy deal better than that!" resumed Jacob, rubbing his hands: "I have heard news, my dear John, that will put some thousand pounds into your pocket!"

"Some thousand pounds into *my* pocket? —Come, come!" exclaimed the Squire, unwrinkling without further hesitation the deep furrows of his brow.

"The new branch of the Midland Counties' Railroad is to cut right through the heart of Deaswold!"—cried Jacob, with a countenance that glowed like the meridian sun.

"A railway through Deaswold?"

"Where even a turnpike-road appeared a blessing past praying for!" added the Rector. "I take it you will nearly double the value of your property."

"But are you certain of all this, Jacob?" persisted the Squire. "Remember the canal vagary you got into your head ten years ago!"—

"Ay, ay! but this time, I have seen the plans.—I can't understand, by the way, how that fellow Ghrimes, as solicitor to the company, managed to get the parish so accu-

rately surveyed without our knowledge!—And, what's more, I've taken half a dozen shares on my own account."

"This is the most extraordinary business!" ejaculated the Squire, thrusting his oaken stick under his arm, and crossing his hands meditation-wise over his chest. "When the branch was talked of at the quarter sessions, nearly a year back, the line did not come within three miles of us;—not nearer, in short, than Basinghill."

"*That* was before the engineers had been at work, my dear fellow! But now all is changed; and they even talk of a station somewhere betwixt Deaswold and Darley Level!"

"God bless my soul!—And pray did you notice the direction of the line through my property?—Thank goodness, it cannot come *very* near the house!"

"There were so many people crowding, and inquiring, and congratulating, in Ghrimes's

office," replied Jacob, whose mind was of anything but a circumstantial turn, " that I cannot be exact to a field or two. I only know that it does not touch the glebe. But, no doubt, you will get an application from Ghrimes before long."—

That night, for the first time in his life, the Squire of Cromer Hall did not so much as close his eyes! — Such an unexpected stroke of good fortune! El Dorado suddenly expanding at his feet! — Whenever he attempted to sleep, visions floated before his mind's eye of engineers with strange instruments, mysterious to his illiterate mind as those of an alchymist or astrologer, taking levels in his valley, or piercing his hill-side with a tunnel. Had he possessed a horse strong enough to carry him twenty miles, hardly would he have abided till morning to make the best of his way to Ghrimes's office, and ascertain for how many acres of land he should be privileged to play the extortioner.

But he was forced to wait till morning, for the passing of the heavy coach through Basinghill, at two miles' distance from the Hall.

"No matter!" thought he, when, as it came in sight, he surrendered the bridle of his old bay to the hands of the slovenly boy who, mounted on a half-broken colt, served him for groom. "The railroad will set all this sort of thing to rights."

"Well — who was right?" inquired his good-humoured brother, who walked to meet the coach the following day, on his return.

"I don't know what you mean about *right*," was the surly rejoinder. "You told me Ghrimes would apply to me in favour of the new line."

"Well?"

"Well! my answer to his application was, that I should instantly petition against it."—

"Against the branch line through Deaswold?"

"About what other am I interested? I consider myself scandalously ill-used in the affair. Here is a railroad,—one of the most serious nuisances that can affect a man's property,—about to run right under my nose, within half a mile of a mansion which has belonged to my family from generation to generation, and to which it will cause the utmost injury and disparagement."

"Injury and disparagement to the Hall?" reiterated his astonished brother.

"And *I* am the last person whom these unprincipled speculators have thought proper to consult about the matter!" resumed his brother, "though my experience and knowledge of the localities would have enabled me to supply gratuitously all the information in which this pettifogging Northampton attorney is wanting."

"Don't abuse Ghrimes!—Every one admits Ghrimes to be the best lawyer in the county," rejoined the Rector, a little shocked. "No

one ever called Ghrimes of Northampton a pettifogger!"

"*I* called him an impertinent ass, no later than last night,—ay, and within his hearing too, if he had chosen to take notice of it," rejoined the Squire, nettled beyond all self-control.

For, alas! by virtue of some species of legerdemain which the nobility and gentry, and other landed proprietors of the county, were besotted enough to call engineering science, it had been decided by the advisers of the new company that not an acre of Squire Cromer's land should be in request! The fatal line was to run

Still out of reach, but never out of view.

Not so much as a guinea of compensation would fall to the share of the proprietor of Cromer Hall!

"Though a blind man might see the advantage of cutting direct from Basinghill through the Westwold Slopes," resumed the in-

dignant Squire, "Ghrimes and his squad have made it convenient to run the line straight through Hutton's farm;—and what with the land to be purchased there, and at Darley Level for the erection of the station, this precious "manufacturing-district" client of his, — this born-with-a-silver-ladle-in-his-mouth Mr. Mordaunt,—will net no less than thirteen thousand pounds!—*Thirteen thousand pounds*, Jacob Cromer!—of which, had I possessed a single friend in the county to advise me, every guinea ought to have gone into my own pocket!—And now, pray, do you wonder at my determination to oppose the line?"—

CHAPTER II.

Trade, without enlarging the British territories, has given us a kind of additional empire. It has multiplied the number of rich, made our landed estates infinitely more valuable than formerly, and added to them accessions as valuable as the lands themselves.

ADDISON.

The irritations of body and mind experienced by an envious man like Squire Cromer, while the railroad which his fretful opposition injured no more than the vast tunnel at Basinghill Cliff would have been hurt by the efforts of a sparrow flying against the abutment, will be readily imagined.

The influx of strange workmen into the parish, during the progress of the works, to the utter destruction of his preserves and rabbit-warren, his fish-ponds and dovecot, served to keep his resentments perpetually

green; and wondrous, indeed, must have been the convenience afforded by the rail, when opened to the public, had it sufficed to reconcile him to his previous annoyances.

But the truth was, that no family could benefit less by such a change than the one at Cromer Hall. So much the reverse of locomotive were their habits of life, that it was not before the Christmas vacation, that the line opened at Midsummer was available to the use of any individual of the name of Cromer, save the hearty Jacob;—whereas, the complete transformation, or, rather, corruption of the hitherto stagnant neighbourhood, became an immediate nuisance. Magdalen Cromer, the eldest of the Squire's three daughters, having attained her seventeenth year, was now settled at home, as "finished," and "out;" and though, in former years, the girls had been in the habit of walking constantly across the fields, to visit their little cousin Emma, at Deaswold Rectory, now

that those once solitary meadows were perpetually infested by strangers, of all conditions, on their way to the Darley Station, the cousins were forced to remain at home, and apart, unless when a servant could be in attendance, or the good-natured rector serve as escort to either his daughter or niece. For his sister-in-law was too much of a Mrs. Notable to stir beyond her garden gate; while the Squire himself was never known to direct his steps into the village on a week day, unless in search of the constable to impound a stray donkey, or secure some vagrant in the cage.—

"Can you tell me, papa," inquired Magdalen, at dinner, one day, after returning from a visit to her cousin, "why they are spoiling the beautiful pastures at Deasmarsh, by throwing up such immense mounds of earth?"

"Some new vagary, connected with the railway, I presume," replied her father, pet-

tishly;—"in which case, Madge, I'm sure you heard no fault found with it at the Rectory!—Your uncle considers every thing connected with the rail a blessing to the parish!"

"The interests of his parishioners are improved by it, I believe," replied Magdalen,—"which suffices to enlist my uncle as its champion.—But the new works can scarcely have any connexion, papa, with the railway. They are half a mile distant from the nearest point."

"Near old Smith's farm, then?"

"Near what *was* his farm—the last outhouse, you know, has long disappeared."—

"I know nothing about the matter, Magdalen. There is no object to attract *me* in that direction."—

The Squire *was*, however, soon attracted in that direction, by receiving, from various quarters, the same inquiry he had been unable to answer to his daughter.—Nor

was he long able to plead ignorance in reply.—

Foundations for a magnificent mansion house were actually laid at Deasmarsh!—The workmen employed were workmen from town. The materials were brought down by the railroad. But the moment the Rector exhibited an interest in the subject, the information he wished to obtain was not long a secret.—

"The mansion was building for Mr. Mordaunt, the new proprietor, as his future residence; and would be finished, furnished, and inhabited, within two years' time."

"Just such taste as one might have expected from a Manchester cotton-spinner!" cried the Squire, with a gesture of angry contempt, on hearing the explanation:—"to build a house, that might serve for a palace, in a field of half-a-dozen acres!"—

Nor till, at the close of the year, he saw the hedges of a dozen adjacent meadows

rooted up, the inequalities of the ground levelled in some parts, to obtain a view of the river, and clothed with plantations in others, while every tree or clump of trees that could tend to the adornment of the estate was carefully protected, could he be made to believe that the straggling old paddocks of Deasmarsh were susceptible of being converted into any thing so nearly resembling a park. When united by a ring fence with Hutton's farm, it became a handsome domain.—

Whatever travellers by the rail might be thenceforward tempted to inquire, "Whose was the frightful old house at the top of the hill?" would lose all interest in the reply to the question, the moment the fine property of Mr. Mordaunt lay developed before them.

"If my father could but rise from his grave, and see every thing about poor old Cromer Hall gone to rack and ruin!" was the seemingly pathetic cry of the Squire,

two years afterwards, as he toiled up his parched paddocks to his unsightly home, after beholding Mr. Mordaunt's handsome carriage turn into his lodge-gates, towards the beautiful seat created by the large fortune amassed by his industry.

And as his complaints were addressed to one accustomed to sympathize in his feelings, or respectfully withhold her dissent—his dutiful daughter,—he escaped being told in return, as would have happened had Farmer Richards been present, that, could old Squire Cromer have foreseen that the value of his property would be increased twenty per cent. by the conversion of Deaswold into a striving and thriving parish, he would have admitted that there existed better modes of providing dowries for his daughters than by pinching a limited income, and getting the savings farmed by a country attorney.—

Up to that moment, grand discussions had been carrying on in the village as to whether

the Squire's family would choose to visit the new-comers, already looked down upon, as manufacturers, in a district purely agricultural; and Magdalen, who, with a mother so occupied by household cares, and no other companion save her cousin Emma at the Rectory, several years younger than herself in age and several more in volatility, and, consequently, more of a plaything than a friend,—began to think that a country life might be improved by some addition to the *dramatis personæ*,—would have given much for courage to inquire of her parents their intentions on the subject.

"I wonder," she at length ventured to say to her pretty little cousin, (whose mother, having died during her early childhood, she had obtained, in her father's house, the ascendancy usually conceded to an only child) "I wonder, dear Emma, what change the arrival of these new people will produce among us, besides exciting envy by their suc-

cession-houses and conservatories! For the last month, papa has been more violent than I ever knew him against what he calls upstarts and shopkeepers."—

"But what does *that* signify?—Mr. Mordaunt is not a shopkeeper."

"He does not, however, belong to one of the county families."

"No, indeed, my dear Madge! Talk to him five minutes, and you will easily find it out!—Except my own dear father, I never saw so pleasant or gentlemanly a man!"

"You have seen him, then?"

"He sent in his name yesterday, before we had finished breakfast."

"And my uncle received him without hesitation?"

"A clergyman and magistrate is public property, you know."

"Mr. Mordaunt came on business, then?" persisted Miss Cromer.—

"He made his appearance, saying, he had

taken the liberty of coming to pay his respects to the Rector of his parish.—And, thanks to my father's hearty cordial disposition, they were friends in half an hour!"—

"That looks well for Mr. Mordaunt!" said Magdalen, frankly. "But, I am afraid, things will not be managed quite so smoothly at the Hall.—Papa has already some kind of grudge against him. Besides considering him an intruder into the neighbourhood—or, rather, that the Deasmarsh estate was bought over his head,—he has had a misunderstanding with Mr. Mordaunt's bailiff, about water-courses, or something of that kind."—

"Oh! but that sort of rubbish will soon be got over, between such near neighbours, whose interest it is to live on friendly terms!" cried Emma.

Magdalen sighed. She was afraid not. She had begun to discover that the animosities and prepossessions of persons leading an uneventful life are apt to expand into a lazy,

unwholesome exuberance, like that of fish in stagnant waters.

"But I shall be able to tell you more about them all to-morrow, my dear Madge," resumed her cousin, "for we dine at Deasmarsh this very day."

"You dine at Deasmarsh to-day?"—cried Miss Cromer, aghast at so rapid a progress of acquaintance.

"Yes,—Mr. Mordaunt said it would be the pleasantest way of presenting his whole family to our acquaintance. And papa, who took at once to a person as open-hearted as himself, did not so much as make the objection I anticipated, that I was too young too dine out. In a mere family party, he seemed to think I should not be out of place."

But it was not *that* idea which had produced Magdalen's exclamation. It had glanced into her mind that, should an intimacy be established between the Rectory and Deasmarsh, in which Cromer Hall disdained

to be included, she should lose the cheerful society of her uncle and cousin; and in return, gain nothing. A sad prospect! For, as it was impossible for a girl of refined and accomplished mind to make to herself so engrossing an interest as her parents, in the petty economy of Cromer Hall, she had already discovered that the summer days were long enough to leave leisure for other diversions than solitary saunterings in the grounds, with no other response to her youthful fancies than the cawing of the rooks.

On the day after the Deasmarsh dinner-party, therefore, Magdalen took care to be betimes at the Rectory. If left to find her way to the Hall, the frank-spoken Emma would either aggravate the prejudices of her uncle and aunt by praises of the Mordaunts; or, perhaps, by some unguarded criticism, afford justification for their antipathy.

"And how did you like Deasmarsh?" said she, coming straight to the point, on finding Emma alone.

"A palace—a perfect palace!" cried the elated child. "So little as I have seen out of this village, it is not wonderful that *I* should be charmed. But my father who, in former days, *did* knock a little about the world, declares that no nobleman's seat could be more richly furnished, or establishment more perfectly appointed."

"I am sorry to hear it," was Magdalen's grave reply. "I want to like the Mordaunts; and surely it is bad taste in people of their class to set up in opposition to the aristocracy?"—

"How like that is to my uncle and aunt!" cried Emma, clapping her hands. "Fie, Madge, fie!—People of *their* class!—People of *what* class?—All we know about the Mordaunts is that they are enormously rich."

"And that their wealth was obtained in trade, and doubled by railway speculation," persisted Magdalen. "It is not *that* I find

fault with; but that they should not understand the fitness of things too well to enter into rivalship with dukes and lords."

"Pho, pho!—Dukes and lords have fine curtains and carpets, and beautiful chairs, tables, and plate in their houses, not because they are lords and dukes, but because they are *rich!*" pleaded little Emma, having laid down her work in the heat of her argument; "and on that point, if Mr. Mordaunt is able to contend with them, why not, pray?"

"At all events, if *disposed* to contend with them," rejoined Miss Cromer, "he will find *us* quite below his sphere."

"Now, Madge,—now, Madge!—When you know that you and the whole family at the Hall look down upon Deasmarsh as—"

"The Hall certainly looks down upon Deasmarsh," rejoined her cousin, with a forced smile, "as well as upon half the parish of Deaswold. But *that* does not imply *hauteur* towards the inhabitants. Tell me,

however, dear cousin, something more about our new neighbours."

"In the first place, then—there is Mr. Mordaunt, an open-hearted, open-handed man, such as my father would have been if equally rich; with a wife a little stately, but nearly as agreeable and sensible as himself. The eldest son (Reresby, they call him,) has not yet made his appearance; but there is a picture of him in the dining-room, which proves his horse and dog to be the handsomest ever seen, and the young man, though the least good-looking of the trio, far from a fright. He will do very well, in short, Madge, for you and I (and Emily and Mary when they come home to take part in our fight) to pull caps about."

"If papa could but hear you!—The Cromers of Cromer Hall pulling caps for the son of a cotton-spinner!—The ten pages we occupy in Burke's Landed Gentry would certainly be inflicted upon you as a task!"

"And a pretty severe one,—considering how tiresome I find the family genealogy when recited piecemeal by my uncle!"

"But surely, Emma, I saw a younger face than Mr. Mordaunt's in the family-pew last Sunday?" inquired Magdalen.

"You *did* take a peep then, Miss Cromer of Cromer Hall, at the family of the cotton-spinner? Well—well—I *know!*—I do not *really* suppose you to be inoculated with the family prejudices by living under the same roof with the family plate and pictures!—I only wanted what papa calls a rise out of you.—There *is* a daughter, and alas! nearer your age than mine."

Already Magdalen's face began to brighten. "A most beautiful girl I thought her, when first introduced to her by her father, who seemed determined that we should be friends," added Emma.

"And had you so soon occasion to change your opinion?"

"No,—I still think her beautiful. But not pleasing—not ingratiating—not near so good-looking as *you*, Magdalen."

A deep blush, and a faint ejaculation of "*me!*" proved that even experience had not inured the grave Magdalen to the wild sallies of her cousin.

"In short, coz,—for you know how I hate to have anything on my mind—in short, I suspect we shall find Matilda Mordaunt the least agreeable of the family. I'm sadly afraid she is—" Instead of finishing her sentence, the young lady demurely resumed her work.

"She is—*what?*"

"I hardly like to pronounce the word, convinced as I am that it is what you all expect of the Mordaunts."

"*Vulgar*, perhaps?"

"Worse!—the superlative of vulgarity,—*purse-proud!* Nothing can be handsomer than her face, or more elegant than her

appearance. But there she sat, silent and surly; as if, after detecting the coarseness of my poor unfortunate muslin frock, she had scarcely patience to turn her head my way."

"This is a sad account!" said Magdalen, with a face of concern.

"If it had not been that Mr. Mordaunt was at the pains to talk a good deal to me," rejoined the parson's daughter, "having no end of inquiries to make about the village and neighbourhood, I should have passed as dull an evening as I used at the Hall, Madge, before you returned home."

An uplifted finger purported to remind the lively Emma of her cousin's often-repeated warning against including the house of all the Cromers in her playful strictures.

"Mr. Mordaunt and my darling daddy," continued she, without seeming to notice the interdiction, "had of course worlds of business to discuss about railroad shares, and poor's-rates. At last, we overheard them reach from

the village to the Hall; and Mr. Mordaunt did not so much as lower his clear ringing voice to observe, 'I find I am sadly out of Mr. Cromer's good books. My friend Ghrimes prepared me to find him hostilely disposed; and this stupid squabble of Wilkes's, concerning the water-meadows, is likely to create a permanent misunderstanding between us; unless, indeed, my dear sir, I may trust to your kindly interposition to place us upon a more neighbourly footing.'—'Depend upon me—depend upon me,' cried my father. 'As parish priest, to heal grievances is part of my calling, and for the sake of my brother's family, I shall lose no time in promoting an acquaintance with yours. I have a charming niece,—as accomplished as she is amiable,—who would be a great acquisition to Miss Mordaunt.' "

"And what did Miss Mordaunt say to such a suggestion?" inquired Magdalen, with a still more vivid blush than before.

"It was not her cue to speak, for it was not *her* my father was addressing.—But I caught a glimpse of her face."

"And it did not look, I am afraid, as if she thought I *should* be an acquisition?" said Magdalen, with a faint smile.

"She looked, at all events, my dear Madge, as if she would be no acquisition to *you!* Never in my life did I behold a more forbidding countenance."

"I am satisfied!" cried Magdalen, kissing the forehead of her young companion. "If I have not gained a friend by the arrival of the family of Deasmarsh, at least, I have not lost my little cousin."—

CHAPTER III.

Rapiere, or Toledo, or other good blade of gentile purpose, would be counted uselesse among his impleementes.
SIR THOMAS OVERBURY.

Mordaunt of Deasmarsh was what Necker called Napoleon—*l'homme nécessaire*—to promote the regeneration of a decaying country. From the moment of acquiring property in the parish of Deaswold, he had made its interests his own. While his person was still unknown there, not an acre of its land or fathom of its water but was familiar to him. Long on the watch for a more considerable purchase, no sooner did he foresee the probably that old Smith's farm would lie at his disposal than, by his activity in the organization of a branch railway in which he became a considerable shareholder, he bespoke

such a direction of the line as at once to benefit the property of the company and his own.

A prosperous capitalist, unencumbered by hereditary engagements or obligations, enabled to will and do, both by strength of mind and strength of pocket, he chose to establish himself at a distance from Burtsmill, ten miles distant from Manchester, where his independence had been accomplished; not from false shame at the origin of his fortune, but because resolved to devote the remainder of his life to the enjoyment of the fruits of his industry.

"Had I settled in Lancashire, or within distance of my old place," said he frankly, in accounting for himself to his neighbour of the Rectory, "I should have been always interfering, or longing to interfere; which, now that I have become a sleeping partner, with the right of introducing hereafter my son into the firm, would only have created jea-

lousies. And I preferred creating a new place, to purchasing the seat of some decayed family from the same dislike of being the origin of heartburnings. I hate to step into another man's shoes."

It would have been cruel on the part of Jacob Cromer unnecessarily to apprize his new friend what fierce heartburnings he had occasioned to the lord of the manor of Deaswold; and Mr. Mordaunt was consequently able to resume.

"It was always the object of my hopes, and a great spur to my industry," said he, "to realize such a capital as would enable me to retire from business and enjoy the world like a gentleman, before I had dwindled down into a 'lean and slippered pantaloon;' and by God's will, my wish has prospered. Freshley, my former partner, was luckily both willing and able to buy me out of the business within a fourth of my share; and in a couple of years, even *that* will be at my disposal, if I find sufficient

profit and charm in a country life to wish my son, as well as myself, to devote himself exclusively to the duties of a landed proprietor."

In the course of further conversation, it came out that this fourth of Mr. Mordaunt's fortune amounted to eighty thousand pounds; a sum which justified the worthy parson in congratulating himself that the poor of his parish had obtained so opulent a patron.

Unafflicted, by right of primogeniture, with the feudal instincts rendering the subordination of his tenants and the power of extracting the greatest number of pounds sterling from the acres of the family estate the chief object of his life, Jacob was too good a Christian not to rejoice at finding the rate of agricultural wages raised in the district, at once by the operation of the railroad and the extension of agricultural improvements introduced by the rich capitalist; and too open-hearted to the interests of his fellow-creatures

to experience more than momentary mortification at finding the autocracy of his forefathers converted into a divided empire. The results of Mr. Mordaunt's domiciliation at Deasmarsh reconciled him to the eclipse of Cromer Hall; and the advantages derived from the railway by the whole country round, silenced his repinings after his rural privacy of former years.

But, whether as regarded the present or the past, matters were otherwise viewed at the Hall. —The grievance of the water-courses became established as a cause of feud for ever and aye, the moment the Squire found his labourers deserting him for the service of the newcomer.—It was in vain that Jacob advocated the establishment of peace between the belligerents.—

"Mr. Mordaunt," he assured his brother, "was a sensible man — a well-intentioned man—a man guided solely by a sense of duty —and, above all, open to argument. — For

their mutual interest, if not for their mutual satisfaction, therefore, it was desirable that a good understanding should subsist between such near neighbours."

But the Squire would not be entreated.

"No—he knew what he was about. He was not going to play second fiddle to any man in Deaswold. Mr. Mordaunt might look into the parish charters if he liked, and see what the Cromer family had been there in the time of Henry VII."

A hint which rendered it difficult to Jacob, who, being somewhat more of a clerk than his elder brother, knew precisely what benefit the Cromer family had derived from church pillage in the reign of Henry VIII. to refrain from a smile.

"Mordaunt has no need to look at the parish charters, my dear John," said he, soothingly, "to learn that he must be always secondary here to the lord of the manor. Nor has he, believe me, the smallest dis-

position to encroach upon any of your rights."

"Thank him for nothing! — Because he can't!—The law will take care of *that*."

"But it will have a sinecure; for I never saw a man more conscientiously inclined to confine himself within equitable bounds. It was only yesterday, when we were talking over the restoration of my chancel, towards which, in consideration of the pew allotted to Deasmarsh—"

"Ay—and what business had the vestry to allot it, I should like to know?"—interrupted the Squire, in a tone to which his brother judiciously turned a deaf ear.

"Towards which," continued Jacob, "he has made so munificent a donation—he was the first to observe, while pointing to our family achievements, many of which are so tattered and torn that they will scarcely hang by the wall—"

"You're not going to sacrifice the trophies

of the Cromer family to this cotton-spinning fellow?"—interrupted the Squire, with a face almost livid with rage.

"On the contrary, my dear John. I was in the act of relating to you that Mordaunt was the first to suggest the propriety of having them carefully repaired."

"Burnished up and begilt, like a sign-post, by some Birmingham candlestick-maker — some cousin, perhaps, of his own!"

"I said — that is *he* said — *repaired*, not restored!" mildly remonstrated the Rector. "The object Mordaunt had in view would be defeated by rendering them ridiculous."

"And what object or business of any kind has he, pray, with the Cromer achievements?"—

"A desire to impress upon the minds of his poorer neighbours, by symbols which have existed before their eyes from generation to generation, for ages past, that the rights exercised over them are stable as those of the

throne; and that those Deaswolders who fear God, and honour the king, should also respect the family from whose ancestors their forefathers obtained bread."

"I don't believe he intended anything of the kind!" was the surly retort of the Squire. "Far more likely that he wished the people hereabouts to see in those old tattered and tarnished relics, the appropriate representation of a decayed family!—"

"But our family is *not* decayed," pleaded his brother. "We are all we ever were. Not an acre of the Cromer estate, my dear John, has ever been alienated. The necessity of providing for younger children may have prevented enterprise or improvement tending to *augment* the rent-roll; but—"

"You will not deny, I suppose, that for the future the possessor of Deasmarsh, whoever he may be, (for a fortune made in trade may be lost in trade, and the present proprietor go to the dogs, from whence, I believe, he came)

will be the first man in this neighbourhood?"—

"A necessary consequence of the progress of times, my dear brother, and no offence on the part of Mr. Mordaunt. Trade and speculation have levelled a thousand distinctions. The House of Commons is full of manufacturers, who, half a century hence, if another William Pitt should arise, will many of them be in the House of Peers; and how can we expect to keep an insignificant nook of Northamptonshire free from the influence of a class which has found its way to the foot of the throne?"—

"I'll tell you what, Jacob," cried the Squire, unable to contain his angry feelings, "if *you* have lost all sense of family pride, *I* have *not*. Into one house of the insignificant nook of Northamptonshire which you choose to disparage, this fellow—this cotton-spinner—shall never set his foot!"—

"I am sorry for it—I am heartily sorry for

it," rejoined his brother. "Of course, I can do no more towards mitigating your determination than by giving you my sincere opinion (as I feel bound to do, both as a brother and spiritual pastor) that, since we *were* to have a rich neighbour at Deasmarsh, we are lucky indeed to have obtained one so wise and upright as Mordaunt; and I think it also fair to add that I hope to see a great deal of him, both in his house and my own; and that any personal offence offered to him will, unless I see cause to alter my opinion of his character, only prompt me to treat him with higher consideration."

While Jacob was quitting the cheerless, naked room, which, at Cromer Hall, assumed the name of study, after this manly declaration, till the sound of the Hall door closing after him warned his brother of his departure, the heart of the angry Squire continued to swell, almost to bursting, within his narrow breast.

"Spiritual pastor, indeed!"—at length escaped his lips—"As if a black coat entitled a brother five years younger than myself to come and lay down the law to me in my own house! And the more I keep the cotton-spinner at bay, forsooth, the more cringing and obsequious the parson intends to be!—My humble service to you, Reverend Mr. Jacob Cromer! It is as well, at least, to know your intentions. Ungrateful fellow!—After all I have done for him!—My wife, who, since the death of *his*, has been as good as a mother to his minx of a girl!—And now, because a vulgar upstart from Manchester has bought his way into the neighbourhood, who can give him claret and pineapple instead of port and pippins, he turns his back upon his brother,—his *own* brother,—his only brother! —But the black coats are all alike,—as sneaking as rapacious!—I never saw the churchman who might not be bribed over by loaves and fishes.—The Deasmarsh cotton-

spinner knew what he was about when he made his first visit to the Rectory. Jacob would go through fire and water for one, whom, *otherwise*, he would have been glad to see thrown into them."

That Mordaunt had paid his respects at the Rectory before he paid them at the Hall was, in fact, the crowning offence to those offered by his bricklayers and drainers.

"But my uncle assures me, dear papa," pleaded Magdalen, when this transpired in his family, "that Mr. Mordaunt expressly stated his desire to call upon you, as a neighbour, as soon as he was satisfied that you would not consider it a liberty, it being your place as the superior to call first; whereas, he waited on my uncle simply as a parishioner."

"Ay, ay!—It sounds plausible enough!" was all the anxious girl could obtain in reply.—"But, mark my words, Magdalen, that Jacob will live to be insulted by the purse-proud upstart,—who, sooner or later, will

prove a firebrand in this hitherto quiet district."

No one better understood the duty of passive obedience than the daughter of Mr. Cromer. But, though she gave up the task of defending one who had committed no offence, she did not the less regret the loss of Deasmarsh, both for her parents' sake and her own.

"Let us say no more about the matter," said Mordaunt to the Rector, who was endeavouring to make awkward excuses for the churlishness of his brother.—"I must trust to some of the chances of country neighbourship to establish me in Mr. Cromer's better opinion; till when, it may be as well that the name of neither party be mentioned to the other — the surest way of letting personal grievances die a natural death."

This was somewhat difficult. For to the schemes of village benevolence suggested by the experience of the pastor, and prospered

by the wealth of the manufacturer, the consent of the Squire was often wanting.

"Do what you choose,"—was his letter of license to his brother,—conscious in how odious a light he should place himself by opposition of such a nature,—"anything sooner than place me in contact with a man of whom I am resolved to know nothing."

And thus, however little Cromer Hall might benefit by the creation of the new seat, the village at least was the gainer; and throve and throve, and grew neater, and brighter, and wiser, and happier, albeit a blockhead was lord of the manor. The schoolhouses, to which he contributed nothing, were not the less frequented; and the cottage-gardens of Deaswold were as pleasant to look at, with their flush of stocks and carnations, as if indebted to the Hall for the premiums securing their emulation.

But it is not to be supposed that, because the Squire affected to see and hear nothing

that was going on, he was either blind or deaf to the growing influence of the Man of Capital. If he did not see it, he inferred it by an inward pang of mortification which is the sixth sense of the selfish. He felt that something great and good was abiding near him, which made his littleness appear more little. His insignificance being every way demonstrated by the superiorities of Deasmarsh, he was forced to console himself by thanking Heaven, twenty times a day, for a thing wherein Heaven had little part—namely, the predominance of the Cromer achievements in the chancel of the old church, and the permanence of the Cromer records in the archives of the old deed-chest. But still, the torments of the envious Hamān were not the less his daily portion.

The especial favour of Heaven, indeed, seemed to fall on the lands and havings of his rival. Abel's sacrifice was accepted. It might be, indeed, that the superior system of hus-

bandry adopted by the man of the day, who was not above learning from books all that is to be gathered from the experience of others, was the cause of his fuller crops and more thriving plantations. But so it was that "the oldest inhabitant" of the parish could not remember having seen such harvests as covered the leas of Mr. Mordaunt: while even the oldest inhabitants of the county were fain to admit that no one who overlooked the green domain of Deasmarsh would have suspected the recency of its creation. The belts were so judiciously planted, — the traces of the hedges so completely obliterated, — the grass so well laid down,—the waters of the widened stream so abounding!—

To glance from those depths of verdure up the parched and almost naked hill-side where Cromer Hall stood alone in its ugliness, like an untoward child in disgrace, or a leper-house of the olden time, was almost a sufficient excuse for the soured temper of its

proprietor, and the uncharitableness of his feelings towards the Mordaunts.

The lapse of two whole years served indeed rather to aggravate than soften his antipathies; nay, nothing but the unconquerable good-humour of Jacob Cromer prevented the Rectory from being included in the interdict laid upon Deasmarsh. For when the master of a family evinces a disposition to be at variance with one of his neighbours, active hands bearing pickaxes and spades are never wanting to assist in widening the breach; and not a week of the hundred and four which had elapsed since Mordaunt took possession of his place, but was embittered by some imaginary trespass, reported as committed by his people or the people of the railroad. The Squire's cottagers were not slow in discovering that, let them remove what hedge-stakes or open what water-sluices they might, so long as they contrived to make it appear that the aggression came from Deasmarsh, they were safe

from molestation; and Joe Wilkes, a cunning old bailiff, who had been picking a scanty livelihood for the last thirty years by mal-administration of the meagre Cromer property, found that his gains were doubled by actively administering to the enmities of his master.

Many a time did he delude the poor Squire into keeping watch with him through the night, for poachers whose depredations he declared to be committed in concert with railway guards, by whom the game was forwarded to town, or sold to the housekeeper at Deasmarsh,—Mr. Mordaunt, with so limited a property in the county, and a lord of the manor so unpropitious, making no attempt to preserve his game.

But the vigils of the malicious pair were infructuous. All that the Squire ever caught, was a severe cold. Deasmarsh was not to be found tripping. It bestowed its blankets and chaldrons of coals on the poor of the

parish. It paid a neighbouring apothecary for administering to their ailments. It progressed in the sight of God and man; but without making itself amenable to the law by infringement of the smallest statute enforceable by Cromer of Cromer Hall.

Magdalen, meanwhile, consoled herself for her loss in the society of a family so worthy as the Mordaunts, by noting the delicacy of feeling with which Emma, in her rapid progress towards womanhood, abstained from profiting as fully she might have done by the general invitation of their new neighbour, lest her cousin should feel neglected.

"Don't praise me, Madge," cried she, when warmly thanked for her thoughtfulness,—"or you will place me under the necessity of sparing my own blushes by more frequent visits to Deasmarsh. I assure you I go there whenever my interests require it:—that is, whenever an importation of new books and music from town, or some rare flower in bloom

in the conservatory, tempts me to overcome my idleness."

"Don't talk so!—You know that *such* considerations never yet influenced either you or my uncle," said Miss Cromer, with a gentle waive of the head.

"What other attraction do you think likely to draw me to Deasmarsh? Mrs. Mordaunt is busy, as in foundership of a family bound, improving her acquaintance with the great people of the county; Matilda remains the same silent repellant personage I first thought her; and the handsome son is Heaven knows where,—touring and making believe to improve himself, in foreign parts. Till *his* arrival, therefore, I make small proof of self-denial in not living at Deasmarsh all the days of the week on which the Mordaunts profess a kind desire to make me welcome."

"I shall not be the less pleased," rejoined her cousin, "when my sisters are settled at home, to release you from the generous self-

sacrifice to which you condemn yourself for the sake of securing me a companion."

But, alas! for Magdalen, the event to which she thus alluded was fated not to be. While the affectionate eldest sister was exercising her skill and industry, and exhausting her girlish funds to adorn the rooms adjoining her own, destined for the use of the two girls, the health of Emily, the second sister, seriously impaired by an attack of scarlet fever from which both had suffered, gave indications of rapid decline. Instead of returning home for the enjoyment of the family union so long looked forward to, the Squire was apprized by a letter from an eminent London physician that the removal of his family to a southern climate afforded the sole chance of preserving her life.

To Clifton, accordingly, the Cromers repaired for the winter; but only to see the invalid sink into an untimely grave. Nor even when her sufferings were terminated by

death, were the cares of the family at an end: Magdalen being the first to observe that her surviving sister, either infected by close attendance on the sufferer, or from bearing in her constitution the germ of the same insidious disease, was languishing even unto death. The close confinement of a too laborious education had destroyed those ill-fated country girls! Scarcely was the spring beginning to be green, which, in their cheerless London imprisonment, they had so often dreamed of enjoying together at Deaswold with their dear Magdalen, when poor Mary was laid beside her sister, in a spot which has witnessed the premature blighting of so many delicate blossoms.—

Their uncle Jacob, when summoned from home to solemnize the last rite over the remains of his nieces, pleaded strongly, that they might be conveyed back to their old home, to rest amid kindred dust. But his brother would not hear of it. The Squire

pronounced it to be a useless waste of money.

"Their winter at Clifton," he said, "had already cost him an enormous sum."

The Rector could not bring himself to remind this sordid parent that an undertaker's bill was the last charge he would ever incur on their account!—He contented himself while mingling his tears over poor Mary's remains with those of the surviving niece who felt it so hard to leave them deserted among strangers;—rendering thanks to GOD, in the silence of his heart, for having tempered the wind to his own shorn lamb—the child in whom his soul delighted.

The idea of what it would have been to him to consign the remains of his darling Emma to an untimely grave, seemed to apprize him, as by sudden discovery, of her all-in-all importance to his happiness!—

CHAPTER IV.

Cel. I pray thee, Rosalind, sweet my coz, be merry.

Ros. Dear Celia, I show more mirth than I am mistress of. But I will forget the condition of my estate, to rejoice in yours.

SHAKSPEARE.

Though, during the absence of the Cromer family from the Hall, a constant correspondence was kept up between Magdalen and her cousin,—the deference of feeling experienced by Emma towards the feelings of one who was watching over the death-bed of a sister, prevented her alluding to the lighter topics occupying her attention.

Even after their return to Northamptonshire, the deep mourning worn by Magdalen, and the pious abstraction into which her mind had fallen after witnessing scenes so affecting,

prevented her cousin from endeavouring to wean her from her griefs.

Of Deasmarsh, she said nothing; and Magdalen inquired as little. The great gap created in her narrow domestic circle by her recent loss, occupied Miss Cromer's whole attention. The closed-up rooms of poor Emily and Mary prevented her listening with undivided attention even to her cousin's account of the health of her rustic protégés, and the new spinning-school instituted under the auspices of Mrs. Mordaunt.

As yet, indeed, Magdalen had not dared to enter the village of Deaswold. She knew by experience the lack of delicacy with which the poor demonstrate their sympathy by straightforward questions; and could not bear to be subjected to inquiries concerning the sufferings and last moments of the poor girls. She was consequently still ignorant that the Mordaunts had acquired in the county a far higher degree of personal con-

sideration than was conceded to the shallow gentility and penurious hospitality of the Hall. In any county, in every metropolis, a man of ten thousand a year, unblemished character, and intelligent mind, works his way to public respect.—But when, as in the instance of Mr. Mordaunt, a pleasant, gentlemanly companion as well as a benevolent Christian whose good-Samaritanism has been ripened into the fullest expansion by the sunshine of his lot, room is readily made for him in a country neighbourhood, where he constitutes a second providence.

All and more than all that the Squire had predicted, in short, was come to pass.—The village saw pretty clearly that Cromer of Cromer Hall was no longer its top-sawyer; while under the hospitable roof of Deasmarsh there assembled a higher order of the estated magnats of Northamptonshire than had been conciliated into acquaintanceship by the ill-tempered pride and shabby ways of the Squire.

By degrees, as Magdalen grew a little more cheerful, all this became as apparent to *her* as to her cousin. She learned from Emma that Lord and Lady Melfont and their son had spent several days at Deasmarsh, in the course of the winter; and then and there the Rector and his daughter had become acquainted with the family of Sir William Settringham, to whom they had since been on a visit at Settringham Abbey, to meet the Mordaunts and the Lord-Lieutenant of the county.

"There were charades and proverbs going on every evening at the Abbey, in which, had I been in better spirits, I should have joined," observed Emma; "for Mr. Settringham and his mother obtained leave from papa!"

"And was it as pleasant at the Abbey as at Deasmarsh?"—inquired Magdalen, unwilling that her little cousin should fancy her wholly indifferent to her pleasures.

"Oh! *nothing*, you know, can be as pleasant as Deasmarsh, — nothing, *nothing* so pleasant as Deasmarsh!"—cried the enthusiastic girl. "At Deasmarsh, every thing is so fresh,—so new,—so good,—so well selected!"—

It was not for Magdalen to hint that, in the eyes of many, such freshness and newness constituted an objection.

"Settringham is a venerable place!" was all Miss Cromer ventured to observe. "I saw it but once, in a formal morning visit. But the fine old gateway and its ivy made a strong impression."

"In *my* opinion, dilapidated gateways and ivy bushes are better for owls than human creatures;" replied Emma, discerning at once the slur cast by inference upon her favourite spot.—"I found nearly the same persons collected at Settringham as at Deasmarsh,—and six times as much effort was made to entertain them;—yet everybody admitted the Mor-

daunts' party to have been far more agreeable."

"My uncle speaks of Mr. Settringham as a young man of extraordinary promise!" said Magdalen in an apologetic tone.

"Yes,—I believe he is wonderfully clever. But such a prig,—such a pedant,—such a bore!—Reresby Mordaunt declares that Mr. Settringham always appears to be reviewing what one says, as he would review a book in the Quarterly."

"Mr. Mordaunt is come home, then?"

"Reresby?—Oh! he arrived before you left the country."

"Indeed?—Unless from *you*, we never hear what goes on at Deasmarsh.—And do you find him as much of an acquisition as you expected?"—inquired Magdalen, with a melancholy smile,—as she recalled to mind the contention predicted by Emma with her three cousins, for the preference of the cotton-spinner's heir.

"The most amusing companion, the most obliging neighbour in the world!"—replied Emma.—"Thanks to *him*, Magdalen, poor little frightened foolish thing as you left me, I have become a famous horsewoman. But he has been in town for the last month. As soon as you came back, he went to London for the season."

"*Because* we came back?"

"To say the truth, partly.—I warned him and his sister that, for some weeks to come, they would see nothing of me;—that I should be always here, unless when I could induce you to come to the Rectory."

"Which sufficed to keep *them* away!"

"They were of course aware that you would be little inclined, just now, for the company of strangers."

"You speak of 'they,' Emma, as though Miss Mordaunt had turned out as charming as her brother?"—

"Much more so! It was for Matilda's

sake, I first endeavoured to like Reresby—whose flighty ways, on our first acquaintance, rather alarmed me."

"Then you no longer think her purse-proud?"

"Hush, hush!—If you know how ashamed I feel that such a word should ever have escaped my lips!—"

"Now you have told me so, dearest cousin, depend upon it, I shall never remind you of your former opinion," replied Magdalen, kindly.

"It was not an *opinion*, Madge; it was an ignorant girl's foolish mistake. I found Matilda silent and reserved, and hastily judged that she must be proud."

"And what *was* she then?"

"Shy! a fault we discover at once in children, yet never suspect in grown-up people, who are quite as liable to the failing! Matilda was afraid of me—yes,—absurd as it may seem, afraid of a little trumpery girl

of fifteen! The unkind things said in all directions by my uncle about manufacturers and cotton-spinners were duly reported to the Mordaunts, the moment they arrived; and Matilda was prepared to find in everything of the name of Cromer contempt, either open or secret, of her and hers."

"And of course you soon undeceived her?"

"Prejudices are not destroyed in a day. Each thought the other proud; and, holding back as I did from the acquaintance, so long as you were here, lest it should interfere, dearest Madge, with our happiness in being together, Matilda was justified in supposing me as cold as I fancied herself. However, I soon discovered that whatever her faults of manner, she was an excellent creature;—possessing a thousand accomplishments of which she thought nothing: and doing good from morning till night, of which she chose that others should know nothing; and so, I

learned to admire and respect her. And, when Reresby came, and I saw her in the company of her brother, where she was perfectly at ease, I soon recanted my former errors."

"You learned to love each, in short, for the sake of the other?"

"Very nearly. At least, each served as interpreter to the other; and now, I perfectly understand them both."

Magdalen was unable to suppress a sigh. It seemed hard that the blessing of such friendship should have fallen to the lot of Emma; who, though sisterless as the will of Providence had lately rendered herself, possessed in her father the warmest and truest of friends. Whereas, the Squire and his wife lived on terms of such Darby-and-Joanish unanimity, as to create a barrier of reserve between themselves and their children.

Even the solace afforded to poor Magdalen, by looking forward to the settlement at home of her elder brother, when Robert proceeded to

Cambridge for the completion of his education, was extinguished shortly after the re-establishment of the family in Northamptonshire.

With a family of five children, the Squire had decided a college education, if indispensable to the future incumbent of Deaswold, to be by no means wanting for the Squire apparent. But now that Magdalen alone survived of the three daughters for whom his penurious economy had laid by a sum of nearly twenty thousand pounds, he began to perceive the possibility of allowing the two brothers to share at the university the same advantages as at Rugby. For two or three years to come, therefore, Stephen would be only occasionally at home.

Unluckily, however, the diminution of the claims both upon the personalty and income of the Squire, had other results besides procuring a better education for his eldest son. In a moment of great enlargement of soul,

or great exacerbation of spite, he intimated an intention to repair and beautify the Hall! As though the loss of his two promising daughters were a relief, he hastily resolved to lay out a part of their portions in whitewash and red paint.—

All was to be restored in its glaring pristine ugliness; and when Magdalen suggested a timid inquiry whether, now that the workmen were on the premises, it would cost much more to have the new-pointing and picking-out of the glowing façade converted into white stucco, so as to render the house a less staring object to the country round, Mr. Cromer resented it as an insult. "Deasmarsh (which he concluded was the object of rivalship) was built of stone: *his* house, of humble brick,—and brick he chose it to remain. He did not wish to shine under false pretences. In *his* opinion, stucco was a contemptible subterfuge."

On the same ground, he refused to have his

hall and dining-room painted to represent oak.

"The old panelling was deal,—mere deal,—and why should it affect to be anything else by false colours?"

Rather than avail himself of the facilities of the railroad, he even allowed a Northampton paper-hanger to disfigure his walls by papers rejected as too gaudy even by the railroad hotels; serving to render doubly apparent the shabbiness of the old furniture partially and hideously renovated by the application of lacquered trophies and gaudy mouldings; while the carpets, which he maintained to be beautiful by citing the amount of the country upholsterer's bills by whom they were supplied, were precisely such as are seen suspended from the window of some Kidderminster warehouse in High Holborn.

"I did not think (forgive me, dear papa) that the old place *could* be made more ugly

than it used to be," whispered Emma to the Rector, as they walked home together across the fields, after a survey of all this flimsy finery. "Not a single additional comfort! Not one of the new inventions for making people warmer in winter and cooler in summer than their forefathers, such as one sees at Deasmarsh!"

"The chief object of my brother," replied the ever-extenuating Jacob, "appears to have been to place the Hall in substantial repair."

"Unluckily!—For there is now no chance of so great an eyesore to the country tumbling down in our time!"

"Remember, my dear," remonstrated the Rector, "that I was born under its roof."

"I did, indeed, for a moment forget it!" cried Emma, fondly clinging to his arm, and pressing her head to his shoulder, while her light steps had a hard matter to keep pace with his sturdy pace. "But you are so un-

like anything connected, in *my* time, with the name of Cromer Hall, dearest father, that I cannot help sometimes—"

"Emma!" again reprovingly exclaimed the peace-making Rector: and again, his daughter admitted herself to be in the wrong, and promised amendment.

"Since you wish it," said she, "I will even try to find beauty in the scarlet carpets and peagreen paper of the frightful old parlour."

"For Magdalen's sake, rather than mine, you should overlook mere errors of taste," was his grave rejoinder.

"What would I *not* do for the sake of the dearest, best, and most self-denying creature in the world!" cried his daughter. "But admit that, with eyes accustomed to Deasmarsh, it is difficult not to be shocked by the glaring coarseness of taste exhibited at the Hall!"

The Squire and his wife, however, to whom the possibility of regenerating the old place

was so unexpected as almost to neutralize their family affliction, could scarcely restrain their feelings of triumph in contemplating the result; and the air of modest deprecation under which Mr. Cromer endeavoured to conceal his vain-gloriousness while pointing out from Basinghill, to his spinster neighbours the Miss Moulseys, what Reresby Mordaunt took the liberty of describing "as that very alarming case of scarlet fever," added a new trait of absurdity to his character.

"Laugh at the Hall,—laugh at the place,—laugh at its practices; laugh even (if you laugh in your sleeve) at my uncle and aunt," said Emma, in reply to the quizzing of her travelled friend; "for I am not afraid that your sarcasm should extend to the parsonage or parson; both being too simple, genuine, and unpretending, to provoke the scorn of even the most wanton jester. But not a word, if you please, Mr. Mordaunt, against Magdalen,—not a single word against Magdalen!—

First, because I love her as myself: secondly, because if you *could* find in her anything to be severe upon, I should have no further hope of clemency."

"And why not extend your prohibitions to my sister?" inquired young Mordaunt, who admired the affectionate nature of Emma as much as her glossy curls and hazel eyes.

"Because Matilda laughs at nobody. Matilda is as full of mercy as of justice!" said Emma, turning towards Miss Mordaunt. "Shall I ever forget her tender-heartedness during the illness of my poor cousins, whom she had never seen and whose parents have shown themselves so ungracious, only because she saw me unhappy!"

"I don't wonder!" rejoined Reresby. "Tears in such eyes as yours appear unnatural. Beings of *your* kind are created to feel and dispense nothing but happiness."

Considering the tone and look with which the sentiment was uttered, it was scarcely to

be wondered at that his sister should consider it prudent to adhere closely to the side of the young couple during the remainder of their saunter through the beautiful coppices of Deasmarsh. For though her father's projects and ambitions for the settlement in life of his son had never been expressly confided to her, enough had transpired concerning them in her presence previous to her brother's return from the Mediterranean, to convince her that, however great the respect of Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt for the Rector of Deaswold, it was not their intention to encourage an attachment between his daughter and their son.

On the contrary, when describing to Reresby the offences to which he had been subjected by the lord of the manor, Mr. Mordaunt observed, with a smile—"He has a handsome daughter, they tell me, with whom you must not take it into your head to fall in love. For, even if I had not other views, my dear Reresby, for your establishment in

life, no earthly consideration would induce me to sanction the intermarriage of one of my children with one of the Cromers."

CHAPTER V.

He speaks! The lake in front becomes a lawn;
Woods vanish, hills subside, and valleys rise;
And streams, as if created for his use,
Pursue the track of his directing wand,
Sinuous or straight—now rapid and now slow,
Now murmuring soft—now roaring in cascades,
Even as he bids.

COWPER.

It is one of the cant sayings of England, where the success of commercial enterprise has created family seats such as, in former centuries, owed their origin to the strong arm of the warrior or cunning spoliation of the courtier—that such and such a place is "a fine place enough, but horribly *new!*" As if, apart from historical association, there existed charms in a weather-stained wall, or

the irregularities of a structure the barbarous growth of succeeding ages.

Few people, however, who have abided in such an establishment as that of Deasmarsh, find courage to repeat the charge. The most moss-grown of venerable castles can ill compare with a mansion whose ease and comfort is perfected by the means and appliances of modern science; where nothing old is to be met with but the pictures on the wall, the wines in the cellar, and the friends collected to enjoy them.

It was this that constituted the charm of Mr. Mordaunt's household. All was smooth —all without let or hindrance. Everything was constructed on the best principles. The windows opened wider and shut closer than any other windows in the county. The slightest touch of a bell brought precisely the servant that was wanted. All was according to the enactments of this age of progress. All was "on an improved principle." And if

the Slaves of the Lamp had known what they were about, *such* arrangements would have imparted greater charm to Aladdin's magic palace than windows of ruby or doors of topaz: Personal comfort, to the worship of which the selfishness of our century is dedicated, coming nearer home to the requirements of human nature than magnificence.

That the system worked well at Deasmarsh was demonstrated in the good humour of its inmates. The Mordaunts were really happy people, because they could have been so without all these accessories; and were, nevertheless, wise enough to know themselves happier *with*. Through life, everything had prospered with them; but prosperity had not hardened their hearts. They were too conscious of the happiness they derived from the beneficence of Providence not to understand the duty of dispensing to others a portion of their contentment.

The only fault of Mr. Mordaunt was that,

instigated by his own strength of mind and firmness of purpose, he could never be made to conceive an obstacle to plans sagely conceived and deliberately matured; and, if his wise and prudent mate were disposed to make greater allowance for the alloy of this world's weakness in the conduct of other people, it was because the tenderness of the mother had somewhat mollified the rigid justice of the wife.

"Don't suppose that because, to complete Reresby's education according to the modern system of things, I have given him the run of the world since he left college, I mean to release him from bit and bridle, and let him lead a life of idleness," was the observation of the master of Deasmarsh to Mrs. Mordaunt, shortly before the return from the continent of his son. "No, no!—I worked my own way through the early part of life, and he must work also;—not as *I* did, and not as Tom will do, for sordid gain. Reresby's

labours will be of a more satisfactory nature. I mean to place him in parliament. The account they gave me of him at Cambridge, when I visited Trinity to enter his brother, determined me to renounce the plans I had previously formed on my own account. It was, in fact, rather late for *me* to commence my apprenticeship in public life; but I have reasons to hope that the country will have in *him* a servant still more efficient and equally devoted. I flatter myself my utmost ambition will be gratified in the person of my son."

His wife made no reply. She was not fond of the word "ambition." She had seen the tranquillity of more than one happy family wrecked by restless cravings after distinction.

"You look as if you were a little disappointed, my dear old woman, at my having determined to do my duty to the country by proxy!"—persisted Mr. Mordaunt, misinterpreting her silence.

"No, indeed," she replied. "Parliament would have carried us, I conclude, to town; and nothing tempts me less than a London life. I was wondering only whether Reresby would not be a happier—perhaps a more useful man,—by exercising his abilities in some humbler sphere."

"Why, what other sphere of usefulness would you assign to a young man who has ten thousand a year keeping warm for him?"

"For the many years to come which I hope will be occupied in the operation," said Mrs. Mordaunt, with a smile, "I would have him improve his mind and steady his character by study and observation; and devote his leisure to promoting the happiness of a family of his own. I trust he will marry during our lifetime."

"Not more than I do. But I have a notion that he will make none the worse match for writing M.P. after his name!"—

"But surely not the happier?"

"Yes, the happier—or I never would have pledged my word to the match."

"Pledged your word?" exclaimed his astonished wife.

"Now I have let so much escape me, my dear, perhaps I had better say more. But, having always observed that talking about matrimonial engagements beforehand is sure to put a spoke in the wheel, I made Freshley promise me to keep *his* wife out of the secret; and was, of course, forced to make a counter promise to the same effect."

"Freshley?"—reiterated Mrs. Mordaunt, in a tone of dismay, the name of her husband's former partner affording a most unsatisfactory clue to the mystery.

"The proposal was of his own making," replied her husband.—"Some years ago, when I first intimated my intention of retiring from the firm as soon as I could dispose of my share, Freshley, who, I really believe, loves me like a brother, afforded proof of his regret

at the dissolution of our connexion, by declaring that if, at five-and-twenty, Reresby should be disposed to marry his niece, and Claudia have grown up to our liking, he would give her a hundred thousand pounds dower, and at his death the whole of his fortune and the whole of the business."—

"But with Reresby's prospects, it is not money he wants. And Claudia Freshley could *never* grow up to our liking!"—

"In yours and Matilda's society, she would improve. And Freshley's fortune, including the business, cannot be estimated at less than four hundred thousand pounds."

"A noble prospect, certainly; but surely of less consequence to *us* than other people? With only Reresby and your daughter to think of (for Tom is nobly provided for by the share of the business awaiting him), is it necessary to sacrifice the happiness of our promising son?"

"Sacrifice it? — God forbid! — But in the

event of our changing our mind, there is always the saving clause of Claudia's growing up to our liking."

"Surely it is Reresby's liking that ought rather to be consulted?"—

"His preferences have hitherto been our own."—

"Because they were those of a boy. But now that he has seen more of the world—a world to *us* unknown—he may acquire other tastes—the tastes of the day—the tastes of the young—"

"I hope you don't mean, my dear, that you think him likely to turn out a fashion-hunter?"—

"I might reiterate your exclamation, and say, 'God forbid!' But I do *not* think it. On the contrary, I believe him to be actuated in his loves and likings only by the best motives and purest taste."

"Well, well," interrupted Mr. Mordaunt, a little more imperiously than was his wont,

"do not go in search of obstacles to a plan which I confess occupies no small share of my thoughts. As a practical man, I know the value of four hundred thousand pounds. Even the hundred thousand to be laid down by Freshley as a marriage portion contains the germ of worlds of enjoyment—ay, and whatever you may think of it,—worlds of virtue! The few good deeds which you sometimes make it your pride to lay to my account, I should never have been able to achieve, my dear wife, without the command of ready money, that fostered my good intent. I would fain see my son enjoy the same opportunities."—

"I am convinced he would be equally prompt to improve them."

"The more reason, my dear, for not raising objections to poor little Claudia Freshley!—All I ask of you, therefore, is to say not a syllable on the subject to Reresby. We have nearly two years before us. Time enough to

apprize him of our project when satisfied that the girl has turned out what we could wish in a daughter-in-law. He is to spend the autumn quietly at Deasmarsh, enlivened by visits to such of his friends as have sporting at his disposal; and before the meeting of parliament, will be returned for Castle Dangan, which I have snug in my pocket. If I know any thing of his character, he will soon be engrossed by aims of too important a nature not to rejoice at having the trouble of a long courtship taken off his hands; more especially when he finds a capital establishment and a pretty little wife provided for him, with nothing to do but to hang his hat up in the hall."—

Fathers seldom *do* know any thing of the character of their sons; or they would not so often propose measures likely to drive them into rebellion. Many was the time that Reresby had been punished in earlier life for his boyish mimicry of the vulgarity of old

Freshley and his family;—worthy, well-intentioned people—of a decidedly inferior order to the Mordaunts, and indebted for their accession of wealth solely to the intelligence of mind of their former partner.

But, even had it been otherwise, Reresby was of too independent a turn of mind to have his destinies pre-arranged, even by his father. If volatile in his tastes, in his opinions he was both decided and obstinate; and to his mother all this was so clearly apparent that, bound by her promise to let the Freshley affair take its course without warning to her son, the pride and joy with which she welcomed him to Deasmarsh,—to the beautiful seat which the industry and judgment of his father had placed on a par with the first in the county,—were somewhat deteriorated by anxiety to penetrate the secrets of his young heart.

She was terrified lest, in the far lands wherein for two years past he had been wandering, he might have formed some attachment likely

to interfere with his father's expectations. For, eager as she was for Reresby's happiness, she was scarcely less desirous that her husband should not be thwarted; and knew, with a woman's intuitive knowledge on such subjects, that the influence of some fair face, or the charm of some graceful nature, might suffice to introduce discord into a family hitherto so united.

It was Spring when he arrived; the period of the year when every day affords to the landscape the same beautiful changes of hue and expression as to the face of a young beauty. Never had Deasmarsh looked more enchanting. The American plants of the home-shrubbery presented their richest masses of bloom; while the fine conservatory adjoining the house afforded to the eye of the fastidious traveller a display of highly cultivated tropical plants, such as, in their native clime, he had rarely seen attain similar perfection.

"Lucky that my father sent me abroad while he was finishing Deasmarsh!" cried Reresby, having luxuriated for a few days in the beauties and comforts of the place; "for, after seeing it in its present perfect state, it would have been indeed difficult to tear myself away. Under my tent among the Bedoweens, or the arcades of the Alcazar, I should have languished after these pleasant shades."

Mrs. Mordaunt was not sorry that the absence of the family from Cromer Hall should remove, just then, the only draw back upon the pleasantness of their neighbourhood. The Rector and his little daughter frequently enlivened their domestic circle. But even when, the death of the poor girls having called away the former, the kind-hearted mistress of Deasmarsh insisted on having Emma for an inmate during his absence, she felt no hesitation on her son's account. Her handsome Reresby, who had been taking part in the

court festivities of Naples and Madrid, Vienna and Paris, and who, she could perceive by words he occasionally let fall, had not passed unnoticed in those brilliant crowds, was in no great danger from the pretty face of the first unformed country girl that fell in his way—more particularly as the predominant charm of Emma Cromer, her childish buoyancy of spirits, was, for the moment, in eclipse. Parted for the first time in her life from her father, she was often in tears: the untimely fate of her two playmates and the bereavement of poor Magdalen exciting her utmost sympathy. To divert the attention of his mother's guest from these afflicting considerations, Reresby entered more minutely than he had ever purposed into the strange eventful history of his travels.

"I know I am a bore. All travellers are bores when they prose about what they have seen and apologize for what they have not seen," said he one morning, while lounging beside the work-table of his sister and her

little friend, in the rotunda surrounded by a divan of Indian chintz that terminated the conservatory, looking through the cool waters of the fountain whose crystal springlets leaped into the air from a marble basin in the centre, up a vista of the rarest and most beautiful flowers, into the morning room where Mrs. Mordaunt was composedly seated at her desk. "But you must bear with me, young ladies, now I have fallen into a narrative vein, lest, for want of an audience, I should be beguiled, sooner or later, into the weakness of print. —Consider into what inventions I might b betrayed by the lying vocation of authorship, in order to fill out the flanks of my lean and hungry volumes!"—

And it was certainly no disagreeable addition to the interest excited by his narrative in the mind of his grave sister, to watch the varying expression they served to call up in the mutable countenance of one whom, as they grew more familiar, the young traveller,

who was recounting his hair-breadth 'scapes, permitted himself to call his "delicate Desdemona."

For Emma was not only impressionable as an intelligent child, but comparatively so ignorant as to be enthralled by descriptions familiar to Miss Mordaunt through the pages of modern tourists. The Desert was new to *her;* or rather a name—a scriptural name, which she seemed almost afraid to take in vain; and, when Reresby proceeded to describe the frightful scenes he had witnessed in the plague-stricken city of Cairo, where his friend and fellow-traveller Sir Herbert Glynne had all but fallen a victim to that terrible scourge, so deathly pale grew the face of his pretty little auditress, and so cold and tremulous was the hand she laid upon Matilda's arm, beseeching her to bespeak the forbearance of her brother, that Reresby was fain to dash into an *olla podrida* of his adventures at Seville; mingling together in brilliant con-

fusion, bull-fights, serenades, seguedillas, fandangoes, Murillo's pictures, Montes's exploits, coppices of geraniums, and groves of orange-trees and pomegranates!—

Poor Emma's often repeated exclamation of "*how* she should like to have been with him, amidst such stirring scenes and spectacles!" was of course parried by his rejoinder, that "in *that* case he should have lost the pleasure of recounting them to her;" and Miss Mordaunt, dearly as she loved the affectionate girl who clung so confidingly to their friendship, could not help sometimes wondering at her brother's patience in taking such pains to entertain one whose simple mind might have been diverted at easier cost.

It seemed like squandering the rich stores of his intelligence,—Oriental pearls of poetry, and the solid gold of still more valuable information, to place them, like bits of worthless glass in a kaleidoscope, for the sport of a moping child.

"She is *so* pretty!" was Reresby's rejoinder, when, one day, his sister rallied him on having given up a fishing party, at Settringham Abbey, for the pleasure of idling about the grounds at Deasmarsh, with Emma and herself. "In these days of artifice and over-education, it is something, let me tell you, to meet with a person so unsophisticated. I don't believe Tommy Moore found any thing purer or fairer than Emma, when he went angel-hunting under the shade of the sumachs, among the woodpeckers of the backwoods."

Of Tommy Moore's angel-hunts Miss Mordaunt knew nothing. But she ventured to suggest to her brother that his admiration of this "unsophisticated person" might possibly ripen into a feeling somewhat more dangerous.

"Why *dangerous*, Matty?" said he. "My father, so indulgent to his children, and so warm an advocate of human independence,

will certainly allow us to exercise a choice in so grave a matter as marriage?"

Matilda was silent.—

"Will you be pleased to open those pretty lips of yours," cried her brother, "which were so voluble, unasked, just now?" —

"Better not!" replied Miss Mordaunt; "for we shall certainly not agree."—

"I do not want you to agree with me. I want you to tell me on what ground my father could object to an alliance with the Cromers?"

"Is it not equally possible that the Cromers might object to intermarry wit our family?"—

"Pho, pho, child! — You are in your dotage before you come to years of discretion.—People of six times their consequence would jump at an alliance with Deasmarsh and ten thousand a-year!"—

"People of six times their consequence can afford to overlook deficiencies insuperable

to *them*.—When George Melfont proposed to me this winter, Lord and Lady Melfont did all that depended upon *them* to forward the views of their son. But I should be sorry that my happiness depended on obtaining the consent of the family at Cromer Hall to my marriage with one of *theirs*."

"Are you in earnest, Matilda?" cried Reresby Mordaunt, whose notions of noble descent, being somewhat elevated by long sojourn in Austria and Spain, among the mildewed palaces of Venice, and ancient castles of Romagna, he could not persuade himself to look with much deference upon obscure esquiredom.—"Do you really mean that, in this century of railroads and patent medicines, your Northamptonshire Squire presumes upon a descent unillustrated by historical distinction or a single chivalrous association, to fancy himself somebody?—Do these Cromers (fatteners of beeves and brewers of strong drink, from generation to

generation,) fancy themselves superior to a race, their equals in education, which has placed itself, by its own efforts, almost on a level with the aristocracy?"—

"Unquestionably!—And, as society is constituted, my dear brother, I fancy such would be the general verdict."—

"You believe, in short, that a nobleman, like Lord Melfont, would be better pleased to connect himself with the Cromer family than ours?"—

"Far better!"—

For some minutes, Reresby Mordaunt maintained the silence of which, shortly before, he had accused his sister. He was evidently chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies.

"During my wanderings in the East," said he, at last, addressing Matilda, but in so low a voice that he seemed to be thinking aloud, "where one cannot help reverting to primitive times, and lamenting the lapse into

barbarism of the countries consecrated to our veneration by the rise of Christianity, it often humiliated me to reflect on the little progress the world has made, during the two thousand years which ought to have sufficed to civilize mankind; and on the vast portions of the earth's surface, where laws as vile and practices as savage still prevail as during the mission of the Apostles.—But hang me if I ever dreamed, dearest Matty, that, in the heart of a polished country like England, such uncharitable narrowness of mind as you describe was still to be found!"—

Miss Mordaunt could scarcely refrain from smiling at the semi-serious earnestness of his apostrophe.

"Admit, however, that it is as well you should be forewarned, before the return of the family to Cromer Hall," said she, "that, though the good Rector, as becomes the religion he teaches, goes hand in hand with my

father, and perfectly understands his value and importance in the country, to the head of the family, Mordaunt of Deasmarsh is still only Mordaunt the cotton-spinner!"

"Hush, hush!" cried Reresby, pointing to Emma and her father, who, having just entered Mrs. Mordaunt's sitting-room, were engaged in friendly greetings;—"for *their* sakes, do not force me to tax, as it deserves, such confoundedly vulgar impertinence!—Even little Emma would never speak to me again, were I to give her my real opinion of the Lilliputian consequence of Cromer of Cromer Hall!"—

CHAPTER VI.

If the equipage of those who ascend into honour and figure, from the successful trade of their ancestors, could bear note of the fact, it would quicken industry in the pursuit of such acquisitions, and discountenance luxury in the enjoyment of them.

SIR RICHARD STEELE.

There appeared some risk that Matilda's warning might have the effect usual in such cases, of imparting undue interest to the prohibited object; for, in the course of the following fortnight, the increasing familiarity of the traveller with Emma, the hearty laughs they enjoyed together, and the number of times that, when Reresby was missing at Deasmarsh, he was found to have spent the morning at the Rectory, served to increase the uneasiness of his sister.

May, however, had scarcely sprinkled the hawthorn hedges of Deaswold with its snowy

blossoms, when the unexpected arrival, in England, of Sir Herbert Glynne, the college friend with whom he had visited the East and parted at Damascus, overthrew, in a moment, his rural plans; and off he went, to pass the remainder of the season in town, without further thought of Deaswold Rectory or his "delicate Desdemona."

"Safe for the present!"—was the secret ejaculation of his sister, whose satisfaction at Sir Herbert's return was not a little enhanced by the new direction it afforded to the thoughts of her brother. For she entertained little fear but that, in the vortex of London life, amid the interests of the punic war of politics and the gay sparkling of the coteries, he would soon forget the pretty face which had derived its charm from the absence of higher attraction.

Nor were her anticipations at fault.—In Sir Herbert Glynne's society, he soon attained other ambitions. At Reresby's

age, impressions are readily taken. After a week's sojourn in town, he recollected Northamptonshire only as the county containing his happy home, and the rich acres basking in the sunshine which he should some day call his own. His views had expanded, the focus of his destiny attained a wider circumference.—A patient listener in the gallery of the House of Commons, his pulse began to throb in unison with those of the nation. He came to care for the "ins" and "outs;" or, rather, for the probability that the "outs" would become "ins," *not* from a desire that such or such a friend might be provided for, but from the grave conviction that the change would operate forcibly on the prosperity of the country. And if, amid the hurry of dinner-parties and crush of operas and balls, the Rector's daughter ever occurred to his mind, it was merely as a prattling, inoffensive, little creature, who was the best listener in the world.—

The summer was over when he returned to Deasmarsh; and, surrounded by its stubble-fields, it struck him, perhaps, as somewhat less of a terrestrial paradise than it had appeared, when viewed in immediate contrast with the barn-like country-houses and wide fallows of the continent. The home enjoyment to which he had looked forward with the greatest eagerness was his father's society. He wanted to talk over with the soundest head and warmest heart of his acquaintance, the new interests he had heard discussed,—the new policy he had seen expounded.

"I can't understand, my dear father," said he, the first time they were alone together, "how, with your powers of mind and stake in the country, you have had courage to keep out of the House of Commons!"

"Easily explained, my dear boy!" was the manufacturer's frank reply. "Till within

these few years, my time belonged to my business; and, on retiring from it, I fell too desperately in love with leisure to part readily from my new charmer.—Nor, as Parliament has not room for a fifth part of those as able and willing as myself to execute the business of the country, is there any necessity for self-sacrifice."

After such a preamble, it was indeed gratifying to expound to Reresby the arrangements made in his favour.—

"*You*, however, my dear son," continued he, "have not yet earned your right to lounge about under the shadow of your oaks. And in *your* case, Reresby, one of my personal objections to a parliamentary career is obviated.—My fortune would not have supported Deasmarsh, such as it has been my pride to make it, and a suitable establishment in town. Whereas, *you* will live in chambers, in lodgings, or at an hotel; and, with the fifteen hundred a year I shall allow you, may

fully support, as a bachelor, the honours of your condition in life."

It was not the honours of his condition in life, however, that dazzled the eyes of Reresby. A noble career was suddenly opened before him. He was prepared to fulfil to the utmost the projects of his father; and, for the sake of their common credit, devote to the study of the laws of the country those idle autumnal months predestined to the rod and gun, or, rather, to pheasants and the fox.

"Poor Emma!" sighed Matilda Mordaunt, when, by the earnestness with which her brother was setting to work, she perceived how much she had in the first instance miscalculated his danger. "I fear she will fret sadly, poor child, at finding herself thus completely forgotten!"—

Great, however, was her relief when, a week or two after Reresby's arrival in the country, Emma, with her usual girlish frankness, apologized for coming so rarely to Deasmarsh.

"You must tell your brother," said she, "that it is not because I am less interested than formerly in his amusing stories. But I give up all my time now to Magdalen. I cannot bear my poor cousin to be a moment alone; and at present, alas! I fear there is little chance of overcoming the prejudices of my uncle and aunt, so as to effect an acquaintance between the two families."

From any other human being, Miss Mordaunt would have attributed this strange excuse to pique, engendered by the slights from which she was suffering. But nothing but truth ever issued from the lips of Emma.

It might be, indeed, that Miss Mordaunt was content to take things on their own showing, from being a little flurried by the approaching arrival of Reresby's Eastern fellow-traveller; who, when their guest in Lancashire, some years before, had left an impression on her feelings which at one time she believed, or fancied, or hoped, to be recipro-

cal; and which the issue of their present meeting would bring to the test.

Her uncertainty concerning the sentiments of Sir Herbert Glynne was, in fact, the origin of the reserve of manner, at first so repellant to Emma Cromer. A suspicion that he was deterred from giving way to his preference by disinclination to unite his destinies with those of a manufacturer's daughter, had chilled the warm expansion of her heart, until she became shy, and apparently cold and ungracious.

It had occurred to her, indeed, that the haste with which Sir Herbert started on his travels was instigated by the desire of putting to the proof of absence an attachment thoughtlessly indulged during his college vacations; and, from the time of his quitting England (an interval devoted by the Mordaunt family to their establishment in their new residence), Matilda had all but made up her mind that, on his return to England, he would prudently allow the acquaintance to drop.

Very difficult had it been, in fact, even to her self-governed nature, to abstain from such seemingly careless inquiries of her brother as might set this point at rest. She sometimes resolved, while conversing with Reresby during his first visit to Deasmarsh, that the day should not expire without explicitly determining whether she were forgotten by Sir Herbert, or whether they were likely to see him on the same familiar footing as of old. But when on the point of giving utterance to her anxieties, the words clave to her lips.—It would be so terrible to learn that there was to be an end, an utter end, to her day-dream!—Even her present spirit-breaking suspense was better than the certainty that the object of her choice was lost to her for ever and ever.—

One day, however, soon after Reresby's return from town, as Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt were planning a dinner party, to include the Melfonts and Settringhams, her brother pe-

titioned that it might not take place till after the 10th of August, " because, *then*, Glynne would be with them;" an announcement which forced his sister to quit the room, lest it should become as clear to others as to herself, that the intelligence thus unconcernedly imparted was to *her* a matter of life and death.

He was coming, then;—and the girl, unable at sixteen to determine whether his attentions arose from the unmeaning gallantry of a flighty, fashionable young man, fancied she had attained, with her one-and-twentieth year, sufficient tact and discernment to ascertain the extent of his regard.—Though the interim had been spent by Matilda in domestic seclusion,

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,

and that clash of interests and cunning which imparts the vulgar science called knowledge of the world, she fancied that the book-learning to which she had been devoting her

leisure, and the *Selbständigkeit* acquired by solitary self-communing, would place her on a par with one who had been conning the great book of mankind in varied climes and countries ;—seeing the West deride the East, and the East, in its turn, contemn the ignoble publicities of the West;—beholding Christians wrangle for precedence within the precincts of the Holy Sepulchre of Mahomedanized Jerusalem ;—and pagans and infidels, with crosses on their bosoms, cringing at the footstool of Christian kings; in short, all the contradictions and hypocrisies of modern life, which "make the angels weep," and the nice observer laugh in his sleeve at the hollow superficiality of the human kind.

There was one point, however, on which Matilda felt conscious of being weak as the weakest of her sex. The satisfaction with which she learned that the Melfonts were to visit Deasmarsh during his stay,—the Melfonts who, in spite of a genealogy that reached

to the crusades, had eagerly courted her for their son,—proved how real was her conviction that a sense of the inequality of their condition had kept the roving baronet aloof. She was ashamed of herself for wishing that he should see that a coronet was an insufficient temptation to the cotton-spinner's daughter; yet, in spite of her better reason, so it was.

But on the day of Sir Herbert's arrival at Deasmarsh, the only addition to the family party consisted of the Rector and his daughter, who had prayed to be excused from the brilliant assemblage of the morrow; and Matilda's dread lest her flutter of spirits while receiving the homage of their guest should become apparent to a mere child, like Emma, served sadly to increase the emotions she was unable to subdue.

Scarcely however were they seated at the abundant and well-served dinner-table, which the tardy arrival of the London train rendered nearly the first scene of meeting between

those so long estranged, when Miss Mordaunt perceived that the attention of both Sir Herbert and her little friend, so far from being directed to herself, was exclusively absorbed by each other. The traveller was in the highest spirits;—perhaps forced,—perhaps arising from the excitement of being again among friends from whom he had been so long parted;—for, under such circumstances, the embarrassment of not exactly knowing whether the privileges of former intimacy will be accorded or withheld, is apt to take refuge in assumed vivacity.

"But surely the same thing, or something very much like it, occurred to Mr. Reresby Mordaunt?" observed Emma, at the close of an excellent anecdote concerning Mehemet Ali, which Sir Herbert had been relating.

"To Reresby?—He never was within miles of the spot!" replied Sir Herbert, with pretended indignation. "If Reresby has been pretending to strut in my borrowed plumes,

I denounce him as an impostor. I see how it is!" continued he: "the popularity he boasted to me of having acquired in Northamptonshire is, after all, the result of basely pilfering my commonplace-book, and establishing a reputation for heroism on the strength of my romantic exploits. Reresby!" cried he (as soon as his friend came to the close of the argument he was holding with the Rector—running down the bagged fox of the narrow gauge), "I have a great mind, sir, to sue you for damages!—I hear you have been pillaging my Oriental treasures; and can well imagine the wanton waste of good things that has ensued from your misappropriation."—

"On the contrary, my dear fellow, you ought to thank me," retorted his friend, "for bringing into use the costly materials you know not how to turn to account."—

"It is easy to charge people with incompetency!" rejoined Sir Herbert, with such

well-dissembled displeasure, that the simple-hearted Emma began to get a little nervous; "but who gave you permission, pray, to snip up my rich brocade into patchwork?—I vow to Heaven I suffer as much from seeing the Doric simplicity of a good story destroyed by a bungler, who makes neither head nor tail of it as a *chef d'œuvre* of the old masters re-touched and varnished by the hands of a picture-cleaner!"—

"You are an ungrateful fellow, Glynne," said his young friend in the same bantering tone. "Considering the sacrifice I made you of half my traveller's relics,—bricks from the tower of Babel, and a slip of palm from the tomb of Eve,—for the behoof of that insatiable rarity-monger Lady Madrepore (to whom or to whose conversazioni you were making such desperate love a few weeks ago), you need not grudge me a few flimsy adventures, which you have worn threadbare, and which no second-hand, second-rate tour-shop

in Paternoster Row would buy off your hands."

It was now Matilda's turn to redden; though, had she taken courage to watch the countenance of Sir Herbert, she could have discerned that the allusion to Lady Madrepore brought no guilty flush to her sallow cheek.

"Reresby is a shabby fellow," he contented himself with retorting,—"to interfere with my coterie reputation. The only laurels that can ever fall to *my* lot, must be cultivated in the *jardinière* of a drawing-room. Whereas, *he* has Parliament before him, with as many garlands in embryo as would serve for a Roman ovation or one of Lumley's ballets!—I can assure you, Miss Cromer, that, while discussing the triangular morsel of the London season to which he was pleased to help himself, the vaulting ambitions of the future senator were evident in every look and word. No balls,—no concerts,—no flirtations,—no fun of any kind!—Reresby was as constant

to the House, as if already the legitimate prey of the whipper-in."

That he addressed these remarks to Emma instead of herself, with whom, albeit the party was too small for anything but general conversation, it would have been more natural that he should have talked than with a perfect stranger, was jealously attributed by Miss Mordaunt to the air of intense interest with which her young friend sat listening to his sallies, and to the charm imparted to her young face by its fluctuating bloom.

For how was she to surmise that the attentions paid to Emma throughout the evening by Sir Herbert were the result of Reresby's hint to him in London, as an excuse for his avoidance of parties, that there was a little field-flower blooming in his Northamptonshire meadows more lovely than the crown imperials and tiger lilies of the fashionable world; or that the discriminating friend was naturally desirous to satisfy himself concerning the merits

of one to whose hands he thought it far from impossible the happiness of Reresby might at some future moment be confided.

Still less was she likely to conjecture that the undisguised interest with which Emma contemplated Sir Herbert Glynne arose from anxiety to ascertain whether *all* young men returning from an Oriental tour were equally fascinating: or whether the feelings of admiration excited in her mind by Reresby Mordaunt,—not as she now saw him, but as he was on his first arrival at Deasmarsh,—were created by her own inexperience rather than by the measure of his deserts.

CHAPTER VII.

I am joined with no foot land-rakers,—no long-staff six-penny strikers, nor any of the mad mustachio purple-hued maltworms. But with nobility and tranquillity; burgo-masters and great oneyers.

SHAKSPEARE.

Like Pentheus when, distracted by his fear,
He saw two suns and double Thebes appear.

DRYDEN.

If the cracks and flaws of human nature be ever entitled to indulgence, Miss Mordaunt might surely be pardoned her momentary regret at the too implicit obedience of Lord Melfont's son and heir to her request that he would forget having ever asked her hand in marriage, in order that the intimacy of the families, as country neighbours, might suffer no interruption.

For, though Sir Herbert Glynne had soon

occasion to witness the friendly deference testified by the whole Melfont family towards her, the coldness of George Melfont's deportment, when constrained by order of precedence to take his place by her side, was little indicative of passionate attachment. Seated between him and the prosy pedantic Mr. Settringham, Matilda was seen to the greatest disadvantage; and the appearance of shy reserve which had formerly so alarmed the susceptibility of poor Emma, entitled Sir Herbert, who was stationed opposite and frequently met her eye, to infer that he was himself the object of her displeasure.

There was consequently every reason for him to regret the absence of his more gracious auditress of the preceding day. When, to evade the encounter of Miss Mordaunt's freezing looks, he endeavoured to enter into conversation with Lady Melfont and Lady Settringham, between whom he was placed, he saw clearly that he was set down as a

Munchausen by the two country ladies, for merely venturing to allude to his recent visit to Jericho beyond Jordan, and having brought down his lion among the highlands of Ethiopia.—And a poor alternative was it to listen in his turn to the discussion between their husbands and Reresby, concerning a notice of action for trespass served by the lord of the manor that morning on Mr. Mordaunt; in which the latter had both law, equity, and usance on his side.

Miss Mordaunt, who noticed the air of abstraction into which Sir Herbert had fallen at the close of the argument, would have given worlds to silence the puerile circumstantiality with which Sir William Settringham kept enlarging on the numerous previous offences against his host committed by their neighbour at Cromer Hall. While her father, too high-minded to be in the smallest degree affected by the Squire's assumption of superiority, listened with more amusement than

chagrin to a summing-up of the insults to which he had been exposed, Matilda, shrinking with the thin-skinned sensibility of youth from any thing like disparagement or contumely, could not bear to find her family placed before the eyes of the man she loved in a light so ignominious. For the first time that she could remember, it was a relief when Lady Melfont, in compliment to the young baronet who wore the "complement extern" of a man of wit and pleasure about town, began to talk of London.

How little analogy there existed between men of wit and pleasure about town,—had Sir Herbert possessed any pretension to the character,—and a family of Lord Melfont's class, which enjoyed its country serenity with as harmless a beatitude in its old-fashioned house in Queen Anne Street as in the midst of its Northamptonshire Park, was not apparent to Matilda. Of the wide gulf existing between their inoffensive respectability and

the flash fashionability of May Fair, she knew nothing. Conceiving the Melfonts to occupy in London the same pre-eminent position they commanded in a straggling country neighbourhood,—she could scarcely account to herself for an outrage of candour so unworthy the honest-hearted Lady Melfont, as her observation—"*We* live so out of the world, that I know little of what goes on. But I am assured that last season was considered an unusually brilliant one."

"Shall I never steer clear of that hateful word 'season!'" thought Sir Herbert, who had flattered himself that, in the homely household of Mordaunt the cotton-spinner, he was secure against all shallow pretence to fashion. But the age and grave aspect of Lady Melfont demanded more courtesy in reply.

"I am a bad person to refer to about London or its pleasures," said he. "Having been three years absent from England, I have completely broken, thank Heaven, those

golden chains of bondage which render man in St. James's Street as complete a slave as man under the thraldom of the Bey of Tunis. As such ties do not, like a fractured bone, naturally reknit themselves, I take particular care to preserve my freedom by remaining a boor."

Without exactly understanding him, Lady Melfont ventured to remark that "a London life was indeed sad slavery; and that, as soon as the Birthday and the Ancient Concerts were over, she and Lord Melfont were quite glad to leave town. Her son being neither in Parliament nor a dancing man"—(the alternative raised a smile on the lips of Sir Herbert)—"they were under no necessity to labour through the last stage of the season."

"Unless the human race can be strengthened and magnified by the progress of modern science," observed Sir Herbert,—(perhaps by way of pretext for his smile,)—"and prize men and women grown like prize geraniums,

— I beg their pardon — pelargoniums, — I know not how our grandsons are to resist the increasing stress upon the human energies!— Within the last half century, the West-end of London is nearly doubled in extent. Yet people are expected to get through the same number of engagements per day, extending from Portland Place to Hyde Park Gardens, and Belgrave Square, as when the two latter were rural retreats in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, where gentlemen went to shoot each other in duels, or dowagers assassinated each other in rival breakfasts."

"Quite true!"—interposed Lord Melfont, who had figured in his youth at the *déjeúners costumés* of Albinia Countess of Buckinghamshire at her *rus in urbe*, among the gravel-pits of Pimlico.

"When one reflects," gravely resumed Sir Herbert, encouraged by having obtained the ear of the House, "on the agglomeration of works the present century has added to

the amount of book-learning the last generation had to undergo, it seems impossible that the same amount of faculties, which could hardly digest the earlier produce, should prove equal to the task. New arts and sciences annually spring up, — a smattering at least of which is indispensable to all thinking people; and unless one were to purchase a patent caoutchouc memory, it will soon become impossible to remember even the new names supplied by modern discovery. —Physically or morally, we do not follow the roads laid down for the use of our fathers."

"At least you will admit," interposed Mr. Settringham, from the further end of the table, (Lady Melfont, unaccustomed to be so longwindedly addressed among her country-neighbours, sitting silent and aghast,)—"at least you will admit, my dear sir, that if new labours and occasion for acquirement have been added to our earthly mission, much

of the business of life has been abridged of its tediousness? I, for instance, am able to perform in a few hours the journey from Settringham Abbey to town, which it took my father a couple of days to accomplish."

"And the consequence is," added Sir Herbert, "that you perform it so much more frequently in the course of the year, that you may set down quite as many days to travelling out of every three hundred and sixty-five, as were sacrificed to the same end by your forefathers.—*Experientia docet.* Born before the discovery of steam, I should unquestionably have satisfied my roving propensities by plodding in the steps of the great Johnson to the Hebrides, or, at the utmost, tripped in those of Oliver Goldsmith on the banks of the 'lazy Scheld or wandering Po:'—a tour to the lakes, or the grand tour sufficing to wear down my energies to the level of my domestic fireside. But, as a citizen of the times when monthly Railway Guides announce the

periodical sailing of steam-packets for New York and Hong Kong,—the Red Sea and the Black,—the North Pole and the South,—I could not of course content myself without eating my pillau at Ispahan and my canvas-back duck on the Schuylkill, before I settled down for life to my English turkey at Christmas.—I have consequently devoted the same number of years to my wanderings; and travelled some thousands of leagues more than by birthright entitled."

"I fancy, Sir Herbert, you accompanied my friend Reresby as far as Damascus?"—observed Mr. Settringham, who, as the best talker in the neighbourhood, was a little afraid of being over-prosed.

"Our friend Reresby accompanied *me* as far as Damascus! But *I* went further and fared considerably worse. If the Overland mail had not charitably picked me up and brought me back to Egypt, I should have been probably chopped into messes by this time at Bokkhara,

and have had Joseph Wolf pilgrimizing across the desert to ascertain whereabouts my remains were eaten by the jackals."

"I cannot but congratulate you, however, my dear sir, on the valuable opportunities you have enjoyed of turning to account the resources of a classical education!" rejoined Settringham, evidently preparing to display his own erudition in the questions he was about to inflict upon his rival.

But Sir Herbert had too little taste for such exhibitions (a serious nuisance in a quiet country party) to indulge his pretensions.

"To own the truth, and speaking it to my shame," said he, "I travelled chiefly to forget what I had learned. How are we ever to become classical authorities to our successors, if we contemplate men and things only through the eyes of antiquity? I am content to see the cities and countries I visit, as they present themselves; to study their laws as they exist, their buildings as they

stand, and their customs as they jar against my own, without caring what was done in the same spot in the days of Xerxes; and, when weary of examining what presents itself, would rather speculate concerning the future destinies of the nation with which I am in contact, than lose my way, misled by conflicting guides, among the dreary mazes of the olden time."

"You are at least a lucky man to have had the alternative at command!" rejoined Mr. Settringham, a little nettled. "But we country bumpkins, whose fate it is to stay at home and hoe our turnips, are fain to content ourselves with intelligence derived from books."

"But don't you see, my dear Settringham," interposed Reresby Mordaunt, "that it is the inordinate vanity of my friend Glynne which makes him disdain the use of pilots and choose his own channel?"

"At the risk of shipwreck!" retorted Sir Herbert. "But, at all events, my foolhardi-

ness endangers no other man.—I have no intention of publishing the chart of my discoveries. The selfish purpose of my travels is accomplished. All I ever intended was to drive from my mind certain disagreeable thoughts to which England had given rise; and avoid the *corvée* of fashionable life to which the rising youth of Britain is liable, between twenty and twenty-five."

"I have usually heard *that* period considered the pleasantest part of a man's life!" observed the matter of fact Lady Melfont, with a conciliatory simper; "before he becomes involved in the duties and responsibilities that mingle cares with his pleasures."

"And preserve his destiny from the insipid glare of a Chinese landscape—all sunshine and no shade!"—retorted Sir Herbert, in a lower voice;—for he submitted in politeness to have his opinions ironed flat by his female neighbour, though there was no occasion to have them previously starched by the pedant.

"But I confess I regard what your ladyship calls the duties and responsibilities of life,—such, for instance, as parliamentary committees, or dabbling in stocks or railroads,—as far less laborious than the work I see gratuitously undertaken by certain of my young friends; who, after rising at one and breakfasting on cigars, have to undergo a *déjeûner*, or *matinée musicale* previous to their ride in the park; then, after scampering home to dress for an eight o'clock dinner-party, despatch a concert or the opera, previous to commencing a round of balls; ending the night nearly as they began the day, with cigars and brandy and water, and the morning sun shining full upon their orgies!"—

"But I assure you *all* young men in London do not lead so unprofitable a life!"—pleaded Lady Melfont, fearing that, as Miss Mordaunt's attention was occasionally attracted towards them, she might suspect the timid sickly George of a share in these fright-

ful excesses.—"My son never smokes.—My son dines quietly with his family at six o'clock."—

"All are not blessed with a family so reasonable to fall back upon!" replied Sir Herbert.—"When, to secure the first burst of the overture on opera nights, I dine at six, the waiters at my club look heartily ashamed of me; and bring me the Morning Herald, instead of an evening paper, as a snob who ought to be satisfied with second best."

"My son is always one of the first in the stalls!" observed her ladyship, again glancing with partial eyes at the blushing George.

"Mr. Melfont is fortunate in belonging to those whose habits favour his tastes," replied Sir Herbert, politely.—"But, generally speaking, I find my London friends, both old and young, instead of indulging the tendencies of their inclination, occupied solely in striving, bustling, and elbowing each other, in order to obtain front seats in the gaudy theatre of

fashion.—People may talk of the Wars of the Two Roses; but I doubt whether they occasioned half the care or outlay produced by the grand struggle of modern times, between the rival battalions of the rich and great."

"Not *rival* battalions, surely?" argued Lady Melfont. "So many of the great *are* rich!"—

"The most considerable territorial fortunes, perhaps, lie with the aristocracy," replied Sir Herbert, more gravely; "but, with few exceptions, the least available. Were an annual mortgage-list published like those of the army and navy, setting forth the liabilities of our nobility, the moneyed magnats of England would add a cubit to their stature and to the depression of their neighbours.—Look at the amount of landed property which, within the last fifty years, has changed hands; and you will find that the plebeian interest has doubled its stake in the country!"—

Not precisely comprehending his drift,

and afraid that the mere utterance of the word "plebeian" in his dining-room might hurt the feelings of Mr. Mordaunt, Lady Melfont was not a little rejoiced that the fine fruit at that moment placed on the table afforded her a safe topic for eulogium.

"I must admit," said Sir Herbert, "that I never tasted, in tropical climates, by spontaneous growth, fruit half so delicious as that for which England is indebted to the resources of art."

"Because," observed Reresby, "those who incur the cost of cultivation are naturally careful to select the finer kinds. But do not expect *me* to forswear myself, by maintaining that England affords anything to compare with the purple figs and transparent apricots of the Levant!"—

"*Mi basta il palazzo Pitti!!*—I am content with those of Deasmarsh," replied Sir Herbert. "A tawny-cheeked Moor-Park for me!"—

"The Deasmarsh forcing-houses, however, will scarcely come into full play for a couple of years," added Mr. Mordaunt, the conversation having become general. "At our house in Lancashire, which adjoined my factory, the stoves and succession-houses had the benefit of our surplus steam, and we had warm baths in the house gratuitously heated in the same manner. There, I had found time to bring the whole system to perfection;—whereas, at Deasmarsh, the fruit is twice as costly, and half as fine."

Matilda was ashamed of the blush that rose upon her cheek at this allusion to the old times she was so anxious Sir Herbert Glynne should forget. But her anxiety was speedily relieved by his enthusiastic ejaculations.

"Thank you, my dear sir," said he, "for having relieved my scruples! I was afraid of offering an affront to your Northamptonshire grapes by admitting that, even in Syria,

I never tasted any half so fine as at Burtsmill; nor did I ever see in the East such exquisite roses as those you had in cultivation at the old place."

"Why, yes! I believe we succeeded pretty well in our gardening," replied Mr. Mordaunt in a gratified tone; "and my partner, who is a richer man than I am, from being childless, has done a great deal more to the place since I quitted it. The fact is," added he, proudly, "that, with the exception of Middlesex, there is not a shire in England where so much money is applied to the enjoyments of life as in our manufacturing county of Lancaster; more, in fact, than is altogether safe, or perhaps altogether right. One of my many motives for removal was the uneasy doubt perpetually struggling in my mind, whether I were justified in exposing the luxury of my existence to the envy of those miserable neighbours by whom it was created."

"I don't know what you call miserable,

my dear sir," exclaimed Sir Herbert. "All I know is, that I never beheld a more prosperous or contented race than your workmen at Burtsmill!"

"I trust so!—I trust in God they were thriving and contented," rejoined Mr. Mordaunt; "for to them am I indebted for all my prosperity. But it was not so throughout the district; nor could I ride five miles ahead, without running against a population whose wretchedness deprived me of all appetite for nectarines and peaches. Unable to relieve, I was glad to escape the sight of this human degradation; but, thanks to the wisdom of the reformed parliament, I shall go to my grave the easier for having seen the evil sensibly diminish. It is one of the noblest tasks of those who legislate for the next generation, (among whom, thank Heaven, my son will be shortly numbered!) that they will have to adjust more nicely the balance of human comfort between rich and poor."

Matilda was not sorry that the time was come for the ladies to rise from table and repair to the drawing-room. For, though proud of the candour with which her father reverted to his condition of life, she was glad to be spared the arguments certain to arise from his last observation; Sir William Settringham and Lord Melfont being stanch protectionists, and accustomed to fight their battles with an acrimonious intolerance of ultra-toryism which it required more than the wise moderation of Mr. Mordaunt to parry.

On their entrance half an hour afterwards into the conservatory, where the lady-guests were taking coffee, there seemed, however, little justification of Matilda's apprehensions that they had been engaged in the endless county-gentleman-warfare of pauperism and poor-laws; for the first question addressed to her by Sir Herbert Glynne, who came straight towards her leading her brother by the sleeve, regarded the name of a very beau-

tiful girl, whom they had encountered while hurrying home across the fields from shooting, to dress for dinner.

"Reresby insists upon it that she is a Miss Cromer," said Sir Herbert. "But, between the little cherry-lipped fairy, with her silken ringlets and infantine graces to whom I lost my heart yesterday, and the regular features and raven braids of the pale-faced nun fawned upon this morning by our pointers, like Una by the lions, I cannot perceive the least analogy."

"*Was* it Miss Cromer whom you met?" inquired Matilda of her brother.

"I conclude so; a very lovely girl, with dark hair, attired in the deepest mourning,—just as you have described her to me."

"A cousin, then, and not a sister, of our pretty friend, Emma," said she, addressing Sir Herbert, as if in explanation. "I agree with *you* that hers is one of the finest faces I ever saw."

"And you are really boy enough to have

thrown away your heart upon the pretty little bachelor's-button at the Rectory, Reresby, when this rose unique was blooming in your neighbourhood?" cried Sir Herbert with real or affected indignation.

"Who told you I had thrown away my heart?"

"Yourself, when we met in London. When I asked you what had induced so great a crowd-seeker as yourself to maunder away so large a portion of the season in the country, instead of citing the merits of Deasmarsh and all that it contains as sufficient apology, you spoke of a pretty prattling little neighbour, who had been shedding honey-dew over your spring!"

"A little less Oriental, if you please! I told you that, though our principal neighbours had left the country, Deaswold Rectory afforded a charming supplement to the family circle, in the shape of a very sensible man and very pretty girl—"

"From whom you found it a hard matter to tear yourself away!"

"From whom, perhaps, I may have found it a hard matter to tear myself away; but, having accomplished the difficulty, whom I should have found it an equally hard matter to remember in London, had it been desirable, —which it was *not*."

"You are, in short, at perfect liberty to fall in love with the beautiful creature at whose feet Don and Donna threw themselves this morning?"

"The one dilemma is scarcely the necessary consequence of the other," rejoined Reresby, more reserved than his friend, whose Irish blood sometimes overmastered his discretion.

"The dark beauty, perhaps, is not so dear a friend of yours as the chestnut?" said Sir Herbert, addressing Matilda.

Miss Mordaunt shook her head.

"Useless, then, I fear, to apply to you for an introduction to her?" returned he. "And

yet, she seemed so much at home in the glebe meadows, that I fancied she must be a resident in Deaswold."

"She is so,—but I have only seen her at church. Miss Cromer is the only daughter of the gentleman you heard spoken of at dinner as having brought an action against my father, and treated him, on various occasions, with the greatest animosity."

"Then I wash my hands of the beauty!" cried Sir Herbert, "for she belongs to a bad lot. Whoever could find it in his heart to show animosity to Mr. Mordaunt, must cherish other things there, rendering him indifferent company for christians. Let the lovely Miss Cromer content herself with the allegiance of the pointers!—I beg to have nothing further to say to her!"

"How easily you are prejudiced, and how unjustly!" exclaimed Miss Mordaunt, with frank earnestness. "Magdalen Cromer is one of the most amiable and excellent persons in the

world. From her uncle and cousin, as well as among the poor of Deaswold, I have heard innumerable traits of her goodness."

Matilda did not pause to observe that it was her brother rather than his friend who lent an attentive ear to these encomiums.

"And just now," she continued, still addressing herself to Sir Herbert, "she is peculiarly an object of interest, from having recently lost her two only sisters by a rapid decline."

"*She* does not look consumptive," observed Reresby, thinking aloud. "Though pale, there was something in her gait as firm as it was graceful."

"Were it not for the devotedness of my little friend Emma," continued Miss Mordaunt, "the poor girl would be left entirely to the society of her crabbed and uninteresting father and mother; people so little liked in the neighbourhood that nobody who can help it ever goes near them. And think

what a resource her company would have been to *me*, but for the ill-feeling of Mr. Cromer!"

"I am more inclined to think of what your society would have been to *her!*" rejoined Sir Herbert with spirit. "The loss be on her father's head;—who deserves retribution scarcely less bitter, for having attempted to harass Mr. Mordaunt."

But Reresby made *no* rejoinder. As if he had heard enough, or perhaps too much of the Cromers, he was slowly sauntering along the conservatory towards the house; gazing upwards with vacant eyes at the scarlet streamers of the passiflora. Had a pitfall opened at his feet, the young heir of Deasmarsh would unquestionably have fallen a victim to his abstraction of mind!—

CHAPTER VIII.

Good nature has an endless source of pleasures in it; and the representation of domestic life, filled with its natural gratifications (instead of the vexations insisted upon in the writings of the witty), is a good office to society.

SIR RICHARD STEELE.

Though the Rectory of Deaswold put forth no greater claims to tastefulness or comfort than the family mansion which stared it out of countenance from the opposite hill, there was a simplicity in its details that bespoke indulgence. If the forecourt, surrounded by evergreens, were dull and formal, the massive beauty of the old bay-trees and noble size of the weeping ash, whose branches almost covered the grass-plot gracing the centre, afforded some compensation.

The sitting-room, which opened from a somewhat dingy wainscoted hall opposite the eating parlour, though called the library in compliment to the small portion of it occupied by the worthy Rector's old-fashioned folios of divinity (which looked as if they knew what they were about far better than the controversial octavos of modern Oxford, standing spruce and gold-lettered by their side), abounded in tokens of being shared with his little daughter. But for the branches of jessamine and musk-rose by which the southern front was covered, that straggled across the window, it would have worn a dreary aspect, however, to be the abiding-place of one so light-hearted as Emma. But the flowers that peeped in, as if in search of a being so kindred with themselves, matched well with her workbox and a few gaily-bound volumes of choice poetry, gift-books to the child of the house.

Yes, "*child!*" — though advancing to the

age of womanhood. The dutiful feelings rendering it almost as much a matter of religion to the daughter as to the Rector himself, to abstain from the slightest change in the room which had been disposed in its present state by her late mother—her mother, whom, by the utmost effort of memory, she could not manage to recollect, were faithful with the faith of childhood. To have filled the room with furniture as rich and beautiful as that of Deasmarsh, Emma would not have relinquished the old-fashioned walnut-wood bureau, in which her mother was known to have kept her letters and account-books. The only difference was, that it was now surmounted by a glass case containing all that remained of her earliest pet — a favourite guinea-hen, given her by "mamma;" on the death of which, of old age, her father had acceded to her wish of having it stuffed; and, thanks to the genius of a Northampton naturalist, the homely, domestic fowl had been made to

assume the appearance of a nondescript ornithological specimen, that would have sadly puzzled Audubon or Yarrell.

The old-fashioned window-seats commanded a small garden, the turf of which was smooth as velvet,—the flower-beds by which it was terminated being divided only by a haha from the well-wooded paddocks of an extensive glebe; a pleasanter view, apparently, in the estimation of both Emma and her cousin Magdalen than the interminable landscape stared over by the Hall; for there they sat conversing, morning after morning, hour after hour—their needlework sometimes in their hands, but oftener in their lap; their young heads enframed by the pendent bunches of pale musk-roses, imparting fragrance to the room, till the even-song of the thrushes and blackbirds, abounding in the Rectory garden, reminded the elder and graver girl that it was time to claim her uncle's arm for returning home.

On the morrow of her encounter with the young sportsmen, her customary chat with her cousin was interrupted by the numerous questions to which Emma, on hearing of the meeting, chose to have explicit answers.

"She had seen Reresby Mordaunt then? —What did she think of him?—Was he as handsome as she expected? — Was he not twice as good-looking as his friend Sir Herbert?"—

And when it appeared that Magdalen had taken too little note of either to be able to distinguish between them, for the first time in her life, Emma a little mistrusted her taste and discernment.

"Reresby Mordaunt was half a head taller than his friend. Reresby's figure and gait were infinitely superior!"

"I saw more of the gait of their dogs than of their own," replied Magdalen, with a smile. "It was as much as I could do to ward off the attentions of a great black setter, who

seemed determined to ascertain the contents of the packet of tea and sugar I was carrying to the lodge-keeper's wife."

"Still, you must have seen that —"

"I assure you, dear Emma, I saw nothing but the outlines of two figures in shooting-jackets—who called off their dogs when they grew so troublesome."

"*My* interest concerning Sir Herbert Glynne," observed the Rector's daughter, blushing from the fear that Magdalen's indifference purported to convey a reproach to her warmth, "arises from a suspicion that he and Matilda Mordaunt have been, or are likely to be, engaged. I never saw her so unlike herself as when I dined there, two days ago. She seemed scarcely to know what she was saying or doing;—and by the care with which she avoided meeting the eyes of Sir Herbert, or answering his observations when not expressly addressed to her, I feel assured that he is the object of her preference."

"Are such then, my dear Emma, the symptoms of affection?"—inquired Magdalen, a little amused by the tone of experience in which her little cousin laid down the law. But the prompt reply of Emma disarmed her.

"Such is Mr. Melfont's deportment towards Matilda herself; and *his* attachment is no secret in the neighbourhood. He has proposed to her, you know, again and again."

"And is there anything in Sir Herbert Glynne,—besides the good looks you speak of, to justify her partiality?"

"*That* I can hardly tell you. I observed him as closely as I could;—listened to every word he uttered, and watched every movement; for, loving Matilda as I do, I should be miserable if she made an unhappy choice."

"And do you feel in danger of being miserable?" persisted Magdalen, still smiling at her earnestness.

Emma hesitated for a moment.

"No!" said she, at last. "He seems

right-thinking, and lively, and gentlemanly. But what startles and vexes me is the sameness between him and Reresby. There is a likeness and yet a difference betwixt them, in all they say and do, that keeps one's attention perpetually on the stretch. Till Sir Herbert came, I thought Matilda's brother the most amusing and original person in the world. He was the first clever young man —the first young man of the world—with whom I was ever in company (for it is no offence to my cousins, Magdalen, to say that the retired life they have led prevents their being *very* polished. But, since I saw Sir Herbert Glynne, I have begun to fear that what I took for an exclusive charm and particular merit, is only the jargon of a class. I am afraid that, if I went into the world, I should see hundreds and hundreds of Reresbys."

"But why *afraid?*—If you find Mr. Mordaunt so agreeable, you ought to rejoice that others are equally pleasant."

"Rejoice!—oh, no. It is mortifying to feel that one has been cheated into over-admiration of anything or anybody!" cried Emma—little dreaming how apparent to her cousin was the excess of her admiration of the brother of her friend.—"There seemed something so brilliant in the sallies of Reresby—something so wonderful in his travels—something so buoyant in his spirits. I certainly *did* think there was but *one* such in the world! And now"—

She had not time to finish the sentence. The sudden appearance of her father gave a new turn to her thoughts. But, just as she was beginning to tell him that he was come exactly in time to escort Magdalen back to the Hall, a fine, tall young man appeared behind the Rector—away from whom poor Emma looked so pointedly as to justify to her cousin the theory she had so recently been broaching.

"Here is my friend Reresby, my dear,

anxious to lay at your feet the first landrails we have seen this year; but scrupulous about parading his shooting-jacket in presence of ladies."

As soon as his daughter had reassured their visitor by a sufficient welcome, the Rector proceeded to present him to his niece. At the moment, indeed, he forgot that there existed the slightest cause for demur. At the moment, he saw in Reresby only a guest under his roof. But even when he came to recollect the enmity between the Hall and Deasmarsh, he experienced no regret at having obeyed the first impulse of his cordial nature. Who could say but an acquaintance between the young people might in the end bring about a reconciliation between their parents?

By the assiduity with which young Mordaunt endeavoured to recommend himself to the gentle girl into whose presence he had thus unexpectedly stumbled, it was clear that *he* at least cherished no rancour against the

family. Nay, a more suspicious man than the open-hearted Jacob might have been tempted to fancy that the eagerness with which young Mordaunt had jumped over a stile to join him in the glebe pastures, and the pertinacity with which he followed him to his own door, might arise from previous knowledge that his lovely niece was housed under his roof.

Nothing, however, was easier than to find topics of conversation. Apologies for the freedoms taken by Don and Donna were followed by allusions to a thousand facts and a variety of personages belonging to the neighbourhood, tending to prove that if it were only the preceding day Reresby had obtained ocular demonstration that he resided within two miles of an angel, popular report had long satisfied him of the fact.

Unused to the company of strangers, although the marble purity of Magdalen's complexion afforded no outward token of embarrassment or emotion, the varying intonation

of her voice evinced no want of sympathy in the compliments she was receiving, or the generosity with which her good deeds were brought home to her. And when to innumerable kind expressions Reresby Mordaunt added an assurance of the regret and disappointment experienced by his sister and himself that, in a neighbourhood so limited, they should be excluded from the society of—he was going to say its brightest ornament—but the prudence of second thoughts induced him to modify the phrase into so near a relative of his friends at the Rectory, Magdalen did not hesitate to admit a reciprocal regret.

All that was earnest—all that was feeling in the young sportsman's expressions and demeanour, appeared to *her* the natural result of his preference of her cousin.—She must, in fact, have been deaf not to overhear poor Emma's aside to her visitor, while she was tying on her bonnet to return home escorted

by her uncle, of—"Did I not tell you how much you would like her?—did I not assure you she was as pleasing as she is good and beautiful?"

Nay, even when Reresby replied by a burst of enthusiastic panegyric, all that Magdalen experienced was gratitude towards the kind girl who, present or absent, was so warm a friend; and it was only want of self-possession that prevented her reminding her uncle, when Reresby proposed accompanying them so far on their way as the confines of the domain of Cromer Hall, that her father might be seriously displeased on hearing of her intimacy with any member of the Mordaunt family.

The impetuosity of Reresby's character and manner, however, imposed silence on her gentle nature; and when, on arriving at the green lane that led toward Deasmill and separated Deasmarsh and the glebe from the plantations of the Hall, he extended his hand towards her instead of raising his hat as she

expected, it was impossible to withhold her own.

Though, while slowly ascending the hill, leaning upon her uncle's arm, she did not once glance back towards the path he must be pursuing, to ascertain whether he were watching their ascent, she felt, with the instinct in which even the least coquetish of her sex is not deficient, that his eyes were fixed upon their movements till they reached the very door of the Hall.

Yes! Emma was right. He *was* a person of singularly ingratiating manners. The frankness of his air, the sparkling intelligence of his eye, the apparent earnestness of his desire to find sympathy in those with whom he was conversing, added a thousand graces to his person. Magdalen admitted to herself that she had never seen any man so attractive. He appeared to be as warm-hearted as her uncle, as animated as her cousin. If Miss Mordaunt were only half so charming, how

great was her loss in the feud that exiled her from Deasmarsh!

The number of times that the daughter of the Squire pondered these thoughts in her mind in the course of that tedious evening would be hard to reckon; and almost equally often was she forced to remind herself that she was unpardonable in envying the consideration for his daughter's happiness evinced by her uncle, in the suppression of his dislikes and cultivation of his friendships. The Rector's political principles, for instance, were ultra-conservative; yet for the sake of sociability and the advantage of his parish, he avoided the possibility of a misunderstanding with a neighbour whose views were so adverse to his own, by declining all political controversy.

"I am too old and too obstinate to be converted," was his plea on the first attempt made by Mr. Mordaunt to engage him in a discussion on free-trade; "nor will I pay you

so poor a compliment, my dear sir, as to fancy your opinions so ill-considered as to be overturned by any argument of mine. Let each, therefore, keep his prejudices close as his account books. We shall have enough and to spare to fight about, betwixt the old and new school of farming, without flinging ourselves headlong into the raging gulf of politics."

"If it were only possible," thought Magdalen, "to moderate in the same manner the petulance of my father! But, alas! every day serves to widen the breach between us and Deasmarsh."

How was it, in fact, to be repaired, so long as Vickers the attorney obtained his living out of the maintenance of the feud? The action now pending was giving rise to a correspondence, such as it required all the gentlemanly feeling of Mr. Mordaunt to treat with temper. Not a day but the cross-post from Northampton brought further grounds of aggravation; and now that the chaste loveliness of Magdalen

Cromer had bespoken the indulgence of Reresby, he, on the other hand, had no patience with the circumstantiality with which Mr. Ghrimes, his father's man of business, considered it his duty to dilate upon the insults of the Squire, whom they all knew to be a fool; or his attorney, whom they all suspected to be a knave.

"Where is the good of keeping open the raw?" said he to his sister one day, when his father had amused them by reading aloud at breakfast one of these provoking statements of what had been better left unstated. "I am convinced that, were there no such things as lawyers in the world, half the squabbles that beget ill-blood in human nature would collapse and fall to the ground."

"And yet, I sometimes wish my father would treat them otherwise than as a joke!" observed Matilda, deeply hurt that Sir Herbert, who was present, should have been admitted behind the scenes. "If, in the first

instance, he had taken up the matter more seriously with our good Rector, he would undoubtedly have brought about a better understanding with his brother; but, so long as Jacob is allowed to fluctuate like a bat between the two armies, he has no motive for promoting a reconciliation. Even Emma, who has been made so much of in this house, and enjoyed herself here so much more than at the Hall, evidently looks upon her uncle as the great man, who cannot be expected to descend on light ground from his superiority of birth and station!"

Little suspecting that this unusual bitterness was produced by a spice of the jealousy inherent in every female nature, Reresby began to fear that Matilda, too, was disposed to stimulate the antagonism he was anxious to lay at rest. He fancied that *she* too cherished vindictive feelings against the Hall!

It certainly was not likely to soften them, that, in the course of the next ten days, her

brother so often contrived to engage his friend Sir Herbert Glynne in walks, and rides, and drives, and visits, that brought them into company with the two cousins. Reresby Mordaunt, (into whose head it had never entered that the man whose entire confidence he believed himself to possess was secretly attached to his sister,) having mentioned to Sir Herbert, previous to the arrival of the Melfont family at Deasmarsh, that, though their son and heir had been refused by Matilda, such was the strength of his attachment, and such the desire of Lord and Lady Melfont to see her his wife, that her parents had sanctioned the renewal of his addresses, he considered that he had no right to avail himself of his facilities as a guest under the roof of the Mordaunts, to frustrate a match so advantageous. "No, no!—since they could put up with nothing short of a coronet, the insignificant individual with two left arms and two left legs, and an equally halting un-

derstanding, whom his peerage in perspective was supposed to render worthy the regard of one of the most charming girls in England, should not be cheated of his chance."

And as it was difficult for Sir Herbert to explain the disappointment of his projects to account for a sudden curtailment of his visit, the utmost he could do was to leave a fair field for George Melfont, by pertinaciously accompanying his friend Reresby, during the remainder of his stay at Deasmarsh, in his shootings, fishings, ramblings, and intrusions at the Rectory.

While this inseparability was imputed by poor Matilda to admiration of the pretty, childish Emma, Sir Herbert, too absorbed by the contrarieties of his situation to take much heed of the fluctuations of feeling of his friend, and convinced that the "bachelor's button" was still the secret object of his admiration, he fancied that he was doing him a

favour, whenever they chanced upon Emma and her cousin in their rides or walks, by addressing his conversation exclusively to Magdalen, so as to remove all obstacle from his laughing and chatting with the Rector's daughter:—an attention which tempted poor Reresby to wish that his fidus Achates would occasionally fulfil the duties of country visiting, by devoting attendance to the ladies of the house in which he was staying.

For to Reresby it appeared impossible that one who had looked face to face upon the pure and intellectual beauty of Magdalen, could from that moment conceive any other female face worthy a moment's consideration; and once when, having chanced to meet her with her cousin in a straggling coppice at the extremity of the glebe, Sir Herbert not only insisted upon carrying for Miss Cromer a basket of wood-sorrel roots which she had been to seek in the woods to be transplanted into her own garden, but inquired whether it

was forbidden to *him* as well as to Mr. Mordaunt's son to escort them as far as the door of the Hall, in a fit of momentary irritation, young Mordaunt was tempted to regard such a proposition on the part of his friend as almost a declaration of love. So vague were the answers he addressed to poor Emma for the remainder of the walk, so heated appeared his brow, and so strange his deportment, that she scarcely knew what to make of him.

"I wish I could persuade you, Miss Cromer," said Sir Herbert, meanwhile, in a bantering tone, (into which, on any other occasion, Reresby would have freely entered) "that I came straight from the railway station to Deaswold;—that I was the keeper of a menagerie,—or a bagman travelling with samples of sewing cotton or Scotch cambric;—or one of the jackals of the Mendicity Society,—or any other character, rather than a guest at Deasmarsh!—It is rather hard upon an inof-

fensive party, like myself, to be tabooed, as a punishment for being the friend of an individual of the name of Mordaunt; and, I assure you, it is doing me and yourselves a great injustice to exclude me from Cromer Hall. Send my friend Reresby to Coventry as thoroughly as you please. Suspicious characters of *his* kind cannot be kept at too great a distance. We would *all* send him to Coventry if we could. Your excellent uncle at the Rectory has, in fact, hinted to me that he finds the frequency of his visits a considerable nuisance."

"My *father?*—Dear Magdalen, I am sure you will not believe any thing of the kind!" cried Emma, panting with indignation.

"I hope you do not imagine that Mr. Cromer would confide his sentiments on such subjects to one of your tender years?" cried Sir Herbert, not a little amused by the genuine storm of indignation which his irony had called up in the hazel eyes usually so

mirthful. "Even to *me*, he spoke seriously on the subject, only in the hope that my intervention might secure him from a continuance of the evil!"—

"I wonder you are not ashamed to assert such a thing, Sir Herbert Glynne!" cried Emma, with increasing disgust.

"Trust me, lady fair, I have lived too long to be ashamed of *any* thing," replied Sir Herbert gravely, "unless sometimes of allowing the natural modesty of my character to interfere with the discharge of a duty:—such, for instance, as that of carrying the basket, which even to *my* muscular arm is no trifling burthen, as far as the door of Cromer Hall, instead of sneaking off when we reach the lodge, like a poacher when a keeper comes in sight."—

"I should be happy to introduce you to my father and mother," interposed Magdalen, becoming apprehensive, from the countenances of both Reresby Mordaunt and Emma, of some bitter rejoinder,—"had not the

recent severe affliction in my family closed their doors against all but our nearest relations."—

Even the forced spirits of Sir Herbert Glynne were tranquillized by the grave sadness of her voice; and they parted at the usual spot, with less perhaps than the customary regret.

CHAPTER IX.

Men of good birth are noted to be envious towards new men when they rise; for the distance is altered, and it is like a deceit of the eye, that when others come on they think themselves go backward.

BACON.

For some time past, the cordiality between the Hall and Rectory had suffered some interruption; and even the intimacy of the two girls became gradually affected by the change.

The sacrifices continually made by Emma to prevent her cousin Magdalen from fancying herself neglected for the sake of Deasmarsh, were at length *felt* to be sacrifices; for, now that she had attained the age of reason, the grave cousin who, as being three years older than herself, had evinced during her childhood an almost motherly indulgence for her frowardness, now called her to account whenever she considered her in fault.

Such at least were the motives which each assigned to herself for seeing less of her cousin. The Cromer Hall family noticed nothing of the change; the Squire being too much occupied with his farm, and the Squire's wife with the domestic economy of her household, to take heed of such trifles as the comfort or proceedings of their daughter. Resenting in the bitterness of their souls the familiarity of the Rector of Deaswold with his chief parishioner, they were, in fact, better pleased that Magdalen should find less attraction in a house where she was exposed to the chance of meeting the various members of the Mordaunt family.

It might be a similar apprehension that so often averted Miss Cromer's morning walks from the Rectory, to which, of old, they were almost daily directed. More particularly since her accidental introduction to Reresby. The eagerness with which he had profited by the first opportunity to make her acquaintance, placed her on her guard against encountering Miss

Mordaunt in a spot where Matilda's studied coldness might perhaps evince resentment of the affronts heaped on her family by that of Cromer Hall.

For Magdalen was sufficiently a physiognomist to have noticed, when occasionally her eyes met those of Miss Mordaunt on entering or quitting Deaswold Church, that the manufacturer's daughter had re-assumed her former severity of mien. Even her salutations to Emma were tinctured by a certain degree of reserve. The lighter-hearted cousin, perhaps, might not perceive it. But this, Magdalen taxed against her as a fault. She *ought* to perceive it. She *ought* to be forearmed against coolness on the part of rich people from whom she accepted advantages she was unable to return.

For, as it could not of course enter into the conjectures of Magdalen that Miss Mordaunt laid to the charge of Emma's girlish coquetries the fact that Sir Herbert Glynne, in spite of his unconcealed joy at seeing her again, had

become gradually distant in his manner, and at length quitted Deasmarsh without further indication of preference, she set down the coolness, which was in reality the result of wounded feelings, to the vulgar hauteur of a *parvenue*.

By neither Matilda nor Magdalen was it surmised that if Sir Herbert Glynne found his way to Deaswold Rectory oftener than was desirable, and occasionally when he must have known the Rector to be engaged elsewhere, it was solely at the suggestion of Reresby. Either because some atonement seemed owing to Emma for the thoughtless manner in which his own attentions had been both accorded and withdrawn, or because he fancied that the happiness of both parties would be ensured by a mutual attachment, he was always finding pretexts for despatching Sir Herbert to the Rectory; where, sooth to say, he employed his visit in eliciting from Emma anecdotes of the sheepishness of George Melfont and the ineptitude of the whole Mel-

font family; and repaid the readiness with which the poor girl supplied him with Melfontiana, by stories of Reresby's triumphs at college, prowess in travel, and popularity with all the world; such as, by the time her visitor took leave, had dyed her young cheek with permanent crimson.

The daughter was too ignorant of the ways of the world, and the father too hospitable and simple-hearted, to discern any thing unusual in these almost daily visits. Conscious that to herself they were rendered charming only by affording information concerning Reresby, Emma, indeed, said nothing about the matter; and it was only the acuteness of jealousy which enabled Miss Mordaunt to discover how large a portion of Sir Herbert's mornings were spent apart from her brother.

For a moment, she was almost tempted to repent having opened the eyes of Reresby to the intellectual inferiority of the girl to

whom he had shown some disposition to attach himself.

Still, it was severe retribution upon her fastidiousness as a sister, to have the little village coquette throw herself at the head of Sir Herbert Glynne!—

Of the result of his projects in favour of his friend, Reresby, on the other hand, took little heed. His thoughts were otherwise engaged. Whatever the party assembled at Deasmarsh, or however good the sporting when they repaired together to the battues at Settringham Abbey, nothing now appeared to arrest his attention.

"My son is taking up his new vocation in good earnest," was his father's explanation to his neighbours of the young man's altered deportment. "The constitutional studies which his travels had caused him a little to neglect, occupy his whole time; and my son is going through a steady course of English law and parliamentary history.—When once he has

was forbidden to *him* as well as to Mr. Mordaunt's son to escort them as far as the door of the Hall, in a fit of momentary irritation, young Mordaunt was tempted to regard such a proposition on the part of his friend as almost a declaration of love. So vague were the answers he addressed to poor Emma for the remainder of the walk, so heated appeared his brow, and so strange his deportment, that she scarcely knew what to make of him.

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readily she had allowed the acquaintance to ripen into friendship, and (though unavowedly) from friendship into a fonder feeling.

It would be difficult to say how soon, or at what moment, the chance meetings brought about by Reresby's watchful assiduity had justified the avowal of his admiration. But, howbeit the habits of England render it criminal to indulge in those feelings and hasty avowals which the exquisite genius of Shakspeare has appropriately adapted to the promptings of an Italian clime, the pure and gentle nature of Magdalen Cromer did not wholly recoil from the addresses by which, after risking an intrusion into the shrubberies of the Hall, he made it clear that in the sunshine of her favour

> either he must live, or have no life.

In the first instance, perhaps, terror wrought more upon her feelings than inclination, to pronounce t' ' without which the

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By neither Matilda nor Magdalen was it surmised that if Sir Herbert Glynne found his way to Deaswold Rectory oftener than was desirable, and occasionally when he must have known the Rector to be engaged elsewhere, it was solely at the suggestion of Reresby. Either because some atonement seemed owing to Emma for the thoughtless manner in which his own attentions had been both accorded and withdrawn, or because he fancied that the happiness of both parties would be ensured by a mutual attachment, he was always finding pretexts for despatching Sir Herbert to the Rectory; where, sooth to say, he employed his visit in eliciting from Emma anecdotes of the sheepishness of George Melfont and the ineptitude of the whole Mel-

font family; and repaid the readiness with which the poor girl supplied him with Melfontiana, by stories of Reresby's triumphs at college, prowess in travel, and popularity with all the world; such as, by the time her visitor took leave, had dyed her young cheek with permanent crimson.

The daughter was too ignorant of the ways of the world, and the father too hospitable and simple-hearted, to discern any thing unusual in these almost daily visits. Conscious that to herself they were rendered charming only by affording information concerning Reresby, Emma, indeed, said nothing about the matter; and it was only the acuteness of jealousy which enabled Miss Mordaunt to discover how large a portion of Sir Herbert's mornings were spent apart from her brother.

For a moment, she was almost tempted to repent having opened the eyes of Reresby to the intellectual inferiority of the girl to

whom he had shown some disposition to attach himself.

Still, it was severe retribution upon her fastidiousness as a sister, to have the little village coquette throw herself at the head of Sir Herbert Glynne!—

Of the result of his projects in favour of his friend, Reresby, on the other hand, took little heed. His thoughts were otherwise engaged. Whatever the party assembled at Deasmarsh, or however good the sporting when they repaired together to the battues at Settringham Abbey, nothing now appeared to arrest his attention.

"My son is taking up his new vocation in good earnest," was his father's explanation to his neighbours of the young man's altered deportment. "The constitutional studies which his travels had caused him a little to neglect, occupy his whole time; and my son is going through a steady course of English law and parliamentary history.—When once he has

was forbidden to *him* as well as to Mr. Mordaunt's son to escort them as far as the door of the Hall, in a fit of momentary irritation, young Mordaunt was tempted to regard such a proposition on the part of his friend as almost a declaration of love. So vague were the answers he addressed to poor Emma for the remainder of the walk, so heated appeared his brow, and so strange his deportment, that she scarcely knew what to make of him.

"I wish I could persuade you, Miss Cromer," said Sir Herbert, meanwhile, in a bantering tone, (into which, on any other occasion, Reresby would have freely entered) "that I came straight from the railway station to Deaswold;—that I was the keeper of a menagerie,—or a bagman travelling with samples of sewing cotton or Scotch cambric;—or one of the jackals of the Mendicity Society,—or any other character, rather than a guest at Deasmarsh!—It is rather hard upon an inof-

fensive party, like myself, to be tabooed, as a punishment for being the friend of an individual of the name of Mordaunt; and, I assure you, it is doing me and yourselves a great injustice to exclude me from Cromer Hall. Send my friend Reresby to Coventry as thoroughly as you please. Suspicious characters of *his* kind cannot be kept at too great a distance. We would *all* send him to Coventry if we could. Your excellent uncle at the Rectory has, in fact, hinted to me that he finds the frequency of his visits a considerable nuisance."

"My *father*?—Dear Magdalen, I am sure you will not believe any thing of the kind!" cried Emma, panting with indignation.

"I hope you do not imagine that Mr. Cromer would confide his sentiments on such subjects to one of your tender years?" cried Sir Herbert, not a little amused by the genuine storm of indignation which his irony had called up in the hazel eyes usually so

mirthful. "Even to *me*, he spoke seriously on the subject, only in the hope that my intervention might secure him from a continuance of the evil!"—

"I wonder you are not ashamed to assert such a thing, Sir Herbert Glynne!" cried Emma, with increasing disgust.

"Trust me, lady fair, I have lived too long to be ashamed of *any* thing," replied Sir Herbert gravely, "unless sometimes of allowing the natural modesty of my character to interfere with the discharge of a duty:—such, for instance, as that of carrying the basket, which even to *my* muscular arm is no trifling burthen, as far as the door of Cromer Hall, instead of sneaking off when we reach the lodge, like a poacher when a keeper comes in sight."—

"I should be happy to introduce you to my father and mother," interposed Magdalen, becoming apprehensive, from the countenances of both Reresby Mordaunt and Emma, of some bitter rejoinder,—"had not the

recent severe affliction in my family closed their doors against all but our nearest relations."—

Even the forced spirits of Sir Herbert Glynne were tranquillized by the grave sadness of her voice; and they parted at the usual spot, with less perhaps than the customary regret.

the distance) that no regret was felt at the obstacle to the completion of what would have added another active feature to that fair and thriving landscape. The key of the unfinished works was left, meanwhile, in the custody of Clemson; who so seldom invaded the premises that, as has been already observed, the waste ground was overgrown with docks, and nettles, and the aspiring bells of the foxglove; while into the mill itself nothing but the summer sun was at the pains to penetrate.

Such was the spot selected by Reresby, to shelter the trembling hind he had contrived to allure within his bounds. The Clemsons were his devoted creatures. The old lady, who had waited upon his infancy, regarded the son of her mistress as a youthful prince, whose will was as the law of the Medes and Persians; while her husband was not only clownishly submitted to the authority of Deasmarsh, as to that of the richest dynasty

Such at least were the motives which each assigned to herself for seeing less of her cousin. The Cromer Hall family noticed nothing of the change; the Squire being too much occupied with his farm, and the Squire's wife with the domestic economy of her household, to take heed of such trifles as the comfort or proceedings of their daughter. Resenting in the bitterness of their souls the familiarity of the Rector of Deaswold with his chief parishioner, they were, in fact, better pleased that Magdalen should find less attraction in a house where she was exposed to the chance of meeting the various members of the Mordaunt family.

It might be a similar apprehension that so often averted Miss Cromer's morning walks from the Rectory, to which, of old, they were almost daily directed. More particularly since her accidental introduction to Reresby. The eagerness with which he had profited by the first opportunity to make her acquaintance, placed her on her guard against encountering Miss

Mordaunt in a spot where Matilda's studied coldness might perhaps evince resentment of the affronts heaped on her family by that of Cromer Hall.

For Magdalen was sufficiently a physiognomist to have noticed, when occasionally her eyes met those of Miss Mordaunt on entering or quitting Deaswold Church, that the manufacturer's daughter had re-assumed her former severity of mien. Even her salutations to Emma were tinctured by a certain degree of reserve. The lighter-hearted cousin, perhaps, might not perceive it. But this, Magdalen taxed against her as a fault. She *ought* to perceive it. She *ought* to be forearmed against coolness on the part of rich people from whom she accepted advantages she was unable to return.

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"My son is taking up his new vocation in good earnest," was his father's explanation to his neighbours of the young man's altered deportment. "The constitutional studies which his travels had caused him a little to neglect, occupy his whole time; and my son is going through a steady course of English law and parliamentary history.—When once he has

taken his seat, there will be little time for reading; and I am thankful to find him so reasonable as to forestal the difficulty."

So gullible, indeed, was the man who, abounding in good faith, suspected no ill at the hands of others, that, even if less desirous that Reresby should not accompany his family on their Lancashire expedition, he would have readily acceded to his son's suggestion, that "it would be as well he should remain at Deasmarsh during their absence, and quietly follow up the line of study he had traced out."

"I shall not be sorry," whispered he to his wife, "to have a sight of Claudia before the marriage is actually proposed to our young M. P.—When they parted,—nearly four years ago,—I admit that she did not promise much.—But in the course of the month we are about to spend with Freshley, you, my dear, will have opportunities of judging her fairly;—and, if all be as we could wish, before the close of the visit, Reresby can be

sent for to spend a few days with us, and decide for himself."

And Reresby was accordingly left behind to devote himself to his "constitutional studies."—For some weeks ensuing, indeed, he was so completely absorbed by this excellent purpose, as no longer to be seen cantering on his favourite hack on the road to the Station; or sauntering with Don and Donna at his heels, followed, in his transit through the village, by the benedictions of the poor. The neighbourhood, seeing nothing of him, believed him to have accompanied his family to the North; and he was consequently unmolested by invitations.

"I lead the life of a hermit," said he, in a letter to his father after rendering an account of some commissions he had executed in the village, "never crossing the bounds of the domain, except to church!—Your hint, or rather Matilda's hint, concerning the expectations that might arise from my visits to

the Rectory, prevent my seeing as much as formerly of our excellent friend there; who, finding me so unworthy a son of one of the best farmers in Northamptonshire, is, I suspect, easily reconciled to the loss of my company."

Not even Matilda, who was present when the letter was read aloud to her mother, surmised that, while telling the truth and nothing but the truth, the *whole* truth was not unfolded by her brother; or that, if Reresby were living the life of a hermit, it was

A hermit, with an angel for his guest!—

or, above all, that, if he eschewed the society of the Rectory, it was to avoid the danger of cross-examination concerning his occupations.

The truth was that, if content to limit his rides and walks to his father's beautiful grounds, it was only because secure therein from all chance of intrusion on the part of Cromer of Cromer Hall. It was well known that the Squire would have had his feet drop off from fatigue, or condemned any member of

his household to the same dispensation, rather than abridge by three miles the most fatiguing walk, by reaching the Hall across the property which he had treated almost as his own when inscribed in the maps of the shire as Smith's and Hutton's farm.

Considering the contempt with which, in spite of parochial archives and family monuments, the man thus obdurate was regarded by the younger Mordaunt, it was strange that he should so scrupulously avoid the meeting. It was not, however, as may be surmised, that Reresby was afraid to trust his temper in an encounter with one who had been heard to indulge in gross abuse of his father. The time for *such* a peril was past. It was that he had no mind to look in the face the father of Magdalen; Magdalen—his mere introduction to whom had brought down upon her the reprehension of her parents; and who would probably have incurred their malediction could it have been surmised how

readily she had allowed the acquaintance to ripen into friendship, and (though unavowedly) from friendship into a fonder feeling.

It would be difficult to say how soon, or at what moment, the chance meetings brought about by Reresby's watchful assiduity had justified the avowal of his admiration. But, howbeit the habits of England render it criminal to indulge in those feelings and hasty avowals which the exquisite genius of Shakspeare has appropriately adapted to the promptings of an Italian clime, the pure and gentle nature of Magdalen Cromer did not wholly recoil from the addresses by which, after risking an intrusion into the shrubberies of the Hall, he made it clear that in the sunshine of her favour

> either he must live, or have no life.

In the first instance, perhaps, terror wrought more upon her feelings than inclination, to pronounce the forgiveness without which the

rash young man refused to quit the spot.—She trembled lest he should be found there by her father. *She* knew, better than he could guess, the coarseness of word and deed into which that father was capable of being excited.

"Yes, yes!—I fully forgive you,"—faltered she, while he pressed within his own her trembling hand.—"Only go, Mr. Mordaunt,—only leave me;—only be careful to quit the premises unseen.—I will—I *do* pardon this one intrusion, on condition that it be not repeated!"—added she, eagerly, on perceiving his unwillingness to obey. "Believe me, I will not think of you unkindly.—I will never resent your conduct.—But oh! for kindness-sake, leave me. Do not, do not expose me to the displeasure of my father!"—

A second interview, if the source of equal terror, was even less resented than the first. It was the only time that beautiful and companionless girl had listened to the language of admiration,—still less, the eloquence of a

lover's protestations.—In Reresby Mordaunt, she saw all that could captivate the eye of woman, or attach her affections. Young, handsome, gentlemanly, intelligent, devoted, romantic,—Romeo himself was not more enterprising or more gifted to make enterprise excused.—After the first stolen interview, it was less culpable than natural that the girl so devoid of sympathy in her own family should dwell incessantly upon the meeting, till time brought about the renewal of that forbidden pleasure.

It is almost an act of sacrilege to lift the veil from a heart so innocent. Let it remain uncertain therefore with which of the two originated the unguarded proposal, after several of these hazardous encounters, that they should agree on some place of meeting less open to surprise.—In her father's grounds, however reassured by fond encouragement, Magdalen never ceased to tremble lest a violent arm should be suddenly laid upon her

companion. — It was not of herself she thought. She had ceased to think of herself. All she cared for now was that the man who showed himself ready to brave the whole world for her sake, should be secured against unnecessary hazard.

"To attempt any explanation with Mr. Cromer, in his present state of feeling towards my family, dearest Magdalen," he had argued, "would be to bring down upon ourselves prohibitions fatal to our future happiness. We must trust to time, therefore,—we must trust to our own prudence."

"Alas! neither to time *nor* prudence!" rejoined Miss Cromer.—"You *would* not, were you acquainted with my father. *His* prejudices are uneradicable. He sees no one,—argues with no one likely to modify his opinions. Be satisfied that nothing we could say or do would ever induce him to consent to our union."

"Then we must some day or other take

courage to dispense with it!"—enjoined Reresby with spirit.—"Mr. Cromer has nothing to urge against the honour or credit of my family; and the opinion of the world would fully uphold our independence."

"The opinion of the world would avail nothing against my respect for my father's authority," said his companion with a mournful waive of the head.

"There comes a time in every human life, my dearest Magdalen," argued the lover, "when parents should appeal to the reason rather than the submission of their children,—when *they* must cease to be arbitrary, or expect that *we* should cease to be dutiful.—*My* father,—I thank GOD for so great a blessing,—prizes the happiness of his children far beyond the care of his pride; and unhandsomely as he has been used by Mr. Cromer, if he saw my future comfort in life depend on marrying into the family, his consent would not be withheld."

Magdalen dared not avow that the pride of Cromer of Cromer Hall was sacred in his eyes as an article of religion, lest she should seem to convey disparagement to the Mordaunts; but it was with divided attention she listened to Reresby's statement that, on his entrance into parliament, a settlement was to be made upon him fully adequate to the maintenance of a family. "And then, dearest," continued he, fixing his impassioned eyes on the contour of her beautiful countenance, "then, Magdalen, I must endeavour to persuade you to share with me, in defiance of every body and every thing, the competence that will enable us to be all in all to each other.—Together, we shall be rich. Together, dearest, we shall be happy. Your affection will stimulate me to untiring exertions in public life. From *you* I shall derive higher impulses of action. All that my father expects of me,—all that I would fain become, in order to do honour to my

country,—will come to pass in the fosterage of such a home as ours."

Such was the encouragement under which Magdalen Cromer consented to the clandestine meetings urged upon her by her lover; and, as his family was now on the eve of quitting Deasmarsh for the North, leaving his time entirely at his disposal, unexpected facilities were afforded to the accomplishment of his wishes.

"It is clear, dear Magdalen," argued he, in a hurried interview with the object of his attachment, immediately after the departure of his family, "that, to secure ourselves from reach of Mr. Cromer, the spot we choose must be on my father's property.—Leave it to me to select some place, easily attainable to yourself, where we may converse in security and peace."

If Magdalen did not expressly *assent* to the proposal, her resistance was only such as, to a lover's ear, implies the unpronounced affirmative!

CHAPTER X.

Now Romeo is belov'd and loves again,
Alike bewitchéd by the charm of looks;
And to his foe suppos'd he must complain,
And she, steal Love's sweet bait from fearful hooks.
Being held a foe, he may not have access
To breathe such vows as lovers use to swear,
And she, as much in love, her means much less,
To meet her new belovéd any where:
But passion lends them power: time, means to meet.

SHAKSPEARE.

In a bushy dingle adjoining the Deas, (a rapid stream, formerly the boundary between Hutton's farm and the property of old Smith, but now so skilfully widened as to form a chief ornament of the beautiful domain of Deasmarsh,) stood a tenement—the cause of no small a portion of the discord prevailing between its proprietor and Cromer Hall; having been constructed soon after his acqui-

sition of the property, with the intention of converting it into a water-mill for the use of his household, had not the jealous lord of the manor, to whom belonged the water-meadows higher up and lower down the stream, interfered with his intentions.

Unable to conceive an establishment on so vast a scale as to require a corn-mill for its use, Mr. Cromer foresaw a fall in the rent of the windmill on his own property when the lease should fall in; and a lawyer's letter was, consequently, despatched to his new neighbour, which, under the advice of Ghrimes of Northampton, prevented his putting his projects into execution.

The mill machinery was consequently abandoned.—

Hopper, stone, and wheel,

lay disjointed and useless on the premises, half hidden by nettles as luxuriant as the malice of the Squire; and, pending the dedication of the premises to some other purpose,

the adjoining dwelling-house, known by the name of Deasmill, was assigned to the use of an old servant of Mr. Mordaunt, who, shortly after their arrival at Deasmarsh, had retired from office. by intermarrying with the ex-bailiff or "looker" of Hutton's farm.

Clemson and his wife, though too old for active service, spurned the idea of being pensioned off as useless; to gratify which praiseworthy pretension, Mr. Mordaunt complied with their whim of fancying themselves still on active service, by placing nominally, under the old man's charge, the young plantations whose care was an especial hobby of his own.

The house was, consequently, finished and fitted up with more care than is usually bestowed on such tenements. Matilda herself had assisted in parcelling out and filling with flowers and beehives the little garden surrounding it, till it became an ornament to the estate. It was only at the Hall (from whence the unfinished mill was discernible in

the distance) that no regret was felt at the obstacle to the completion of what would have added another active feature to that fair and thriving landscape. The key of the unfinished works was left, meanwhile, in the custody of Clemson; who so seldom invaded the premises that, as has been already observed, the waste ground was overgrown with docks, and nettles, and the aspiring bells of the foxglove; while into the mill itself nothing but the summer sun was at the pains to penetrate.

Such was the spot selected by Reresby, to shelter the trembling hind he had contrived to allure within his bounds. The Clemsons were his devoted creatures. The old lady, who had waited upon his infancy, regarded the son of her mistress as a youthful prince, whose will was as the law of the Medes and Persians; while her husband was not only clownishly submitted to the authority of Deasmarsh, as to that of the richest dynasty

of the district, but full of abhorrence of the Squire, who, when Hutton's farm was held by hands less influential than those of Mr. Mordaunt, had oppressed and harassed his humble neighbours in a spirit of petty despotism worthy of feudal times.

Next, therefore, to the satisfaction of obliging one of the name of Mordaunt, old Clemson was disposed to prize an opportunity of spiting one of the name of Cromer; and, when it was whispered to him by his wife that the young lady, for whose behoof "Master Reresby" was desirous of obtaining the key of the mill-works, was no other than the daughter of the Squire, that on the quiet bench, sheltered among its up-springing alders and hazel-bushes, they might enjoy occasional interviews secure from the scrutiny of Cromer Hall, there was a spice of malicious joy in the readiness with which he surrendered his charge into the keeping of his master's son.

And now, secure in themselves and each other, Magdalen and him of whom she had pledged herself to become the wife, enjoyed their almost daily interviews. A hurried walk through the shrubberies of Cromer Hall brought the trembling girl into the green lane leading direct to Deasmill; and the slightest errand to the Rectory or village formed a pretext for escape from home. In that direction, her father never set foot;—in *no* direction her mother;—and bad indeed must have been the weather that disappointed them of their customary meeting.

Every day that brought them better acquainted added new charm to interviews sweet, from the first, with the sweetness said to be attached to all stolen pleasures; and Magdalen soon learned to esteem as a friend the man who, in the first instance, had simply captivated her fancy. Nor was she long in commanding from Reresby a degree of reverence, rarely the portion of one so young and

fair. Conscious that the return of his family into Northamptonshire, and the arrival of her brothers from college, must put an end to the happiness they were enjoying, they prized it only the more from being forced to number the golden sands in their glass.

"I sometimes tremble," whispered Magdalen as they sat together on the old bench, noting with regret that even the foliage by which it was surrounded, though the most tenacious of all verdure, was beginning to fall under the influence of early frost; "I sometimes tremble lest poor Emma should perceive how seldom I now visit the Rectory, and suffer her suspicions to be aroused. Though you assure me that, after her acquaintance with Sir Herbert Glynne, she ceased to take much interest in your proceedings, surely it must strike her as strange that you scarcely ever wait upon my uncle?"—

"Do not be afraid!—Aware of my father's

desire that I should apply myself in earnest to my studies, the good Rector is convinced that I am shut up with my Hansard and blue paper books, whetting the edge of my wits. Depend on it, dearest, he perfectly approves my absence. But why do you not occasionally contrive to see your cousin?"—

"Because I have not courage to look her in the face!—To confide in her is out of the question. Even if her discretion were to be relied on, I have no right to perplex her sense of right and wrong by admitting that I am deliberately deceiving my parents. Be the blame of these furtive meetings on my own head! I must not injure Emma by my example. Still, to impose upon one with whom I have lived on terms of sisterly affection, is an act of treachery I cannot attempt."—

Unable to blind himself to the tears that rolled down the pure pale cheeks of Magdalen, as she alluded to the deceit she was

practising, and already chilled by painful presentiments, Reresby shrunk within himself while the shrivelled leaves were whirled in eddies around them by the gusts of the fitful breeze. It was a dreary time. The water-flowers on the margin of the Deas were withering on their reedy stems. The stream, swollen by autumnal rains, rose threateningly to the summit of the bank, so that its coarse herbage was partly submerged. Little temptation to be sitting under the open sky on such a spot at such a season! Not a token or portent of good was discernible to those sufficiently ill at ease within themselves to look anxiously abroad for omens.—

"If I am to see you thus unhappy, my own dear Magdalen, from the mere anticipation of our separation," whispered Reresby, when, under the influence of that universal dreariness, the tears of his companion increased so as to demand his aid in wiping

them away, "I vow to Heaven I will risk the worst at once!—We cannot be made *more* miserable by Mr. Cromer's severity! And there is always a chance that the cry of nature in his heart may plead something in our favour."—

Somewhat better acquainted than himself with the heart in question, Magdalen roused herself from her despondency to implore him to refrain from such an act of madness as a premature and precipitate disclosure.—

"We must trust in Providence and each other," said she; "for at present, believe me, nothing must be attempted with my father. And if —"

Her own name, pronounced in an eager whisper, apparently at her elbow, suspended the words of remonstrance on her lips; when Reresby, starting up, perceived through the nearly leafless branches the face of old Mrs. Clemson, full of mysterious importance, beckoning him towards her garden-palings.

"Either lock yourselves into the mill, or let the young lady come round into my house," said she, "for, as sure as life, Mr. Reresby, there's folks upon the watch in the lane!"—

The former alternative presented so much the greater temptation, that Reresby, in communicating to Magdalen the old lady's panic, did not so much as allude to the second proposition. Till all probability of espial seemed out of the question, therefore, they remained in their retreat, still absorbed by the discussion in which Mrs. Clemson's fears had surprised them. But when at length, after Reresby had previously beat the bushes and examined every lurking place, Magdalen ventured forth and hurried across the lane into her uncle's meadows, with the intention of paying a short visit at the Rectory as a pretext for her absence from home, young Mordaunt almost repented not having accepted Mrs. Clemson's thoughtful offer.

For, scarcely had the mourning garments of Magdalen disappeared in the distance, when he distinctly saw one of the Squire's labourers emerge from behind a pollard-willow, situated a few yards above the entrance to Clemson's garden, and start off at speed in the direction of the Hall!

To overtake the fugitive, and by bribes or threats secure his discretion, was Reresby's first impulse. But he found that the man was already out of sight. Nor had he courage to follow Miss Cromer and endeavour to warn her of what had occurred, lest the dread of finding herself in her father's presence, under such circumstances, should prevent her returning home. He had seen her tremble at mere mention of her father's name; more especially since the irritations of his feud with Deasmarsh stimulated his ever stubborn nature.

"Better trust to chance!" was the monologue of the agitated lover, as he directed his

steps across his father's grounds towards the house. "I may be mistaken. The man may have been lurking there on some pilfering errand of his own; and I doubt whether one of the Squire's men *dare* accost him with such a story! No need therefore unnecessarily to alarm poor Magdalen."—

Sore, however, was his heart within him, when he reflected that, even had not her brothers been on the point of arriving at the Hall, and within a week, his own family at Deasmarsh, the espial he had witnessed would render it unpardonable on *his* part to betray his beloved Magdalen into further peril of detection.—

His fears had not, even in the first instance, outstripped the truth. The following day, when Magdalen entered her mother's sitting-room soon after breakfast, to inquire whether Mrs. Cromer had any work or occupation to assign her for the day, her foot was suspended on the threshold by the sound of her

father's voice at the highest pitch of exacerbation. Even her mother, rarely excited to anger by any thing more important than the discovery that her damask table-cloths had been cut by the carelessness of the footman, or her preserved apricots suffered to candy, was indulging in epithets that probably pointed at the delinquency of some gadding housemaid.—

"I could not have supposed the little hussy capable of such conduct!" said she. "I hope, my dear, you mean to place her father on his guard? If the story should get wind, her character would be gone for ever!"—

"Gone!—It is gone *already!*" cried the Squire panting with rage. "The whole family is disgraced. If a daughter of mine had been detected in such proceedings, as God is my Judge, she should not have a day's life left in her, to repent with!—A little viper!—And young Mordaunt, too!—To

choose such a fellow as *that* for the sacrifice of her credit and respectability!—To provoke the malediction of her family for the sake of the cotton-spinner's son!"—

Panic-struck by the sound of her parents' voices in such an extremity of excitement, poor Magdalen now became breathless with emotion. What had Reresby been doing?—Whom had he been betraying into folly?—That the clandestine meetings at Deasmill could be the subject in discussion, did not at first glance into her mind; so conscious was she that, had her father suspected *her* as Reresby's confederate, he would have smitten her senseless to the earth.

For a moment all was confusion in her mind; and the faces of her father and mother being averted, instead of proceeding into the room, she leaned heavily and half-fainting against the open door, thanking Heaven for the mistake of persons that had occurred.

A convulsive gasp relieving her overcharged

bosom, at length attracted the attention of Mrs. Cromer.

"Here is Magdalen," said she, pointing to the door. "Inquire of *her*. Perhaps *she* may know something about the matter."—

"I trust not;—for *her* sake, I trust not!"—cried the enraged Squire. "Woe betide the child of mine that would dare to act as go-between in such a business,—woe betide her, I say!—If I thought Madge yonder capable of aiding and abetting her cousin, or even concealing her disgrace, by GOD Almighty, I I would kick her out of my house!"

Even Mrs. Cromer was shocked by his violence. Even Mrs. Cromer seemed to think he was going too far,—perhaps, because her daughter had staggered to a chair, and was sitting with her eyes fixed upon the Squire's gesticulations, in a state bordering on catalepsy.

"Magdalen is incapable of conduct so foolish or so wicked!"—said her mother,—

striving to pacify her husband. "Magdalen knows as little and *wishes* to know as little of these Mordaunts as we do.—Go into your own room, my dear," continued she, assisting her to rise and reach the door, as soon as the poor girl appeared a little recovered.—"I want to talk to your father."

And as soon as she had disappeared, Mrs. Cromer hastened to suggest the impropriety of even alluding to a subject so heinous in presence of a modest young girl, like her daughter. It was not for Magdalen to learn that such an act of turpitude as a clandestine meeting at Clemson's farm was so much as possible.

She even prayed her husband to be more guarded in his terms and gestures, in presence of their poor child.

"Since the death of her sisters, and particularly of late," resumed Mrs. Cromer, "Madge has been so nervous and delicate, that I cannot bear to have her agitated. If

one does but speak a little quick or sharp to her, she startles and turn pale, and the tears come into her eyes for a little or nothing."

"So much the worse.. Such megrims always increase by indulgence!"—cried the Squire, morosely. "What business has a country girl to be nervous?—We shall be having her favouring us with hysterics presently!"—

"She is our only one, now," rejoined Mrs. Cromer, with as much sensibility as was in her nature.—"We must not forget *that.*"

"*One* may be as great a plague as half a dozen!" cried the Squire, not perceiving the tender drift of the observation.—"So pray let me hear no more of such nonsense. As to Emma, I shall communicate what I have discovered to her father, the moment he returns from Northampton. And if my brother don't break every bone in her skin, I shall think very ill of his sense of duty."

"Your brother does not always see things

in the same light that *you* do, my dear. Remember the terms on which he chooses to stand with the Mordaunts!"

"As parson of the parish, I suppose, it isn't to be expected that he should run counter to a wealthy parishioner. But you don't suppose that even Jacob looks upon Mordaunt in the light of a *gentleman?*"

"Lord Melfont does,—for he was anxious that his son should marry the daughter."—

"The daughter is a personable girl, with whom young Melfont fell in love; and a wilful man must have his way.—Such things have happened often enough before now.—Lord Buntingford married his washerwoman, and Lord Robert Kildargan his cook.—But you cannot think so meanly of Jacob as to fancy that, even when he finds his daughter has been giving young Mordaunt the meeting among hedges and ditches, like a gipsy-wench or a parish 'prentice, he would think the matter mended by marriage? I'm told that Mor-

daunt's father was a parish boy!—And whatever sneaking thing Jacob may have been tempted to do about Deasmarsh, such a match would be a thing to shame not only *him* but his kith and kin. Step into the study and cast your eye upon our family tree; and show me the Cromer that has ever demeaned himself by a connection with trade!—*Your* grandfather, my dear, was the oldest baronet in the shire, and my mother was sister to Sir Robert Harbuckle.—My grandmother—"

Mrs. Cromer, who stood in as little need of instruction in these points as in the Church catechism, ventured to interrupt him by observing that "she should certainly be sorry to see one of her *own* children intermarry with the Mordaunts. But that as Emma and her father were on terms of intimacy with the family at Deasmarsh, Jacob perhaps might think proper to—"

"I don't know what Jacob may think proper to do—" cried her husband, bursting

open, partly with his hand and partly with his foot, the door of a room that was getting too hot to hold him,—"but this I can tell you—and I beg you will take care to have it repeated both to your daughter and niece;—that if Emma Cromer becomes the wife of a Mordaunt, never does she set foot over my doorway again!—And what's more, any one of her cousins that holds communication with her, after such a derogation, is neither son nor daughter of mine!"—

CHAPTER XI.

He frequently exposed himself and left his condition worse than it was before; and the éclaircissement commonly ended in the discovery of the persons from whom he had received his secret intelligence.

CLARENDON'S HISTORY.

Rarely did the Squire find his way to the Rectory; never, unless he had some personal interest to serve.—But, in spite of his objection to waste a moment of the time which he felt due to his peas and beans, his oats, barley, and cattle,—in spite even of a mistling rain that would almost have wetted a Highlander, off he went that very afternoon to the village.—He felt it his duty to lose no time in making his brother uncomfortable.

So disturbed was his air as he pushed his way into the room where Jacob was quietly

engaged in the concoction of the morrow's sermon, that the first impulse of his host was to offer him a glass of wine.—He must be wet?—Would he have his great coat dried?—Would he not adjourn to the library, where there was a fire?—

No!—He chose to sit in his wet things. He preferred damp shoes. He wanted no luncheon. He wished to stay where he was. All he desired was to unburthen his mind, and transfer the weight where it would be more galling.

Sadly fearing that the manifest discomposure of the Squire might originate with one of his sons, of whose college irregularities rumours had reached his uncle, the kind-hearted Jacob drew towards his brother, prepared to listen with sympathy, and counsel with care;—and great indeed was his amazement on finding that the preamble concerning filial delinquencies and the curse attendant on paternity with which Mr. Cromer com-

menced his narrative, regarded himself and his daughter, rather than the young Hopeful of the Hall.

Startled as he was, however, when the worst was told, his surprise arose only from the fact that a man in full possession of his faculties, like the Squire, should have allowed himself to be imposed upon by so shallow an invention.

"You cannot surely *believe* this absurd history?" said he,—without so much as a cloud upon his countenance; "for, if you did, John, you never would have found courage to tell me so coolly what, if true, would have broken my heart!"

Mr. Cromer, who had been at unusual pains to infuse an air of sympathy into his recital, was a little piqued at the insinuation.

"To show you *my* opinion of the report, (for, after all, it is but a report, and the report of a day-labourer who may have had motives of his own for inventing it,") continued the

Rector, "let us refer the question instantly to my girl.—You shall hear Emma's unstudied explanation of the business—"

"No! no!—pray don't expose me to a young lady's whimpering!" said the Squire doggedly. "Quite enough to be favoured with scenes and fainting-fits at home!—My own daughter's delicate nerves are enough for *me!*"

"I think I can promise you that Emma will let you off without so much as a flood of tears," replied the fond father, with a smile.

"Then I promise you that her boldness in denying what I know from an eye-witness to be true," retorted the Squire, "won't be a jot the more to my taste!"

"At all events, since you think so seriously of the business as to have judged it necessary to communicate to me, concerning my motherless girl, what you knew would inflict infinite pain," said the Rector, more gravely, "I

must exact, my dear brother, that you allow your niece an opportunity of vindication."

And the stern manner in which he quitted the room and traversed the hall towards Emma's sitting-room carried with it so much authority, that his elder brother followed him with the same silent sense of inferiority as when he beheld him officiating in the robes of his sacred calling at the Communion Table, or beside the open grave of his daughters.

"My dear Emma," said the Rector, as the solitary girl who was installed in the window-seat, occupied either with the needlework in her hand or in watching the dead leaves contending in eddies with the autumnal rain that soddened the half-withered lawn,—who started up on their entrance, as if to disguise the reverie in which she was surprised,— "my dear Emma, have you ever, pray, on any pretext, or for any cause whatever, visited Deasmill?"

"Deasmill?—Yes, papa!" she replied,

still a little confused by their sudden entrance,—

"You see!" exclaimed her exulting uncle, while her father, not a whit dismayed, drew her by the arm towards the chair in which he had placed himself, while his brother was triumphantly installed on the hearth-rug.—

"And what took you there, my dear?"—

"Mrs. Clemson is an old servant of the Mordaunt family."—

Again, the Squire glanced exultingly at his brother!—

"And they all frequently visit her and take an interest in the prosperity of her little household."—

"And *you*, too, I presume, Miss Emma, take an interest in the old woman's concerns?" sneered her uncle, overjoyed at his justification,—

"I am ashamed to say that I have never thought of her since the family have been away!" replied his niece, blushing for her

groundlessness of your suspicions?" said Jacob, addressing his brother more coldly than was his wont. "I am happy to say that, in my own mind, your statement did not excite so much as the shadow of a doubt. Had it been otherwise, I can scarcely answer for what I might have said or done in retribution of the calumny. As it is, I can afford to limit my indignation to a request that you will dismiss from your service the skulking fellow who, for some bad purpose, has misled you by wanton misrepresentations."

"On that point, I shall decide and act for myself," said the Squire, buttoning up his still steaming great coat, and striding across the room to seek his hat for instant departure.—"The girl who could find courage to meet a young man clandestinely in an uninhabited building, is not likely to want face to deny it."—

"Do you mean to say, brother," cried Jacob, boiling over with sudden indignation

"that you do not *believe* the explanation so frankly given by my daughter?"—

The Squire made no reply. He was apparently engaged in satisfying himself of his hatmaker's address.

"I am not easily put out, John," resumed the Rector, trembling in every limb for very rage, "but there are some things that no man—that is, no *father*—can stand to hear! Don't trifle with me, therefore.—This girl," said he, placing his arm round Emma's waist, "this girl is motherless; there is no one to take her part but *me*. Reflect, therefore, before you speak again, whether you have a right to injure her by surmises for which, I pledge you my word as a gentleman and a minister of the Gospel, there is not the slightest foundation!"—

"I see no great need for reflection," was the Squire's haughty rejoinder. "Believe what you think proper; but give *me* leave to do the same."—

"Give you leave to have more faith in the word of a hedger and ditcher than of my daughter Emma?"—

"Considering the company into which you have thought proper to introduce your daughter Emma"—

"Brother!" interrupted Jacob in a loud voice, "before words pass between us that must render us enemies for life, let us part,—let us part quietly,—let us afford ourselves time for consideration."—

"Nay! If you want to make a quarrel of it, make it and welcome!" growled the Squire, pushing open the library-door and contriving that, as he traversed the hall, his voice should be heard in every part of the house. "Since the Mordaunts came into this country, Jacob, you've found it a better spec to stick to the cotton-spinner than to *me*. More was to be got by hanging on at Deasmarsh, than at Cromer Hall.—'Tisn't often I've entered your doors within the last

three years. But, as you've now as good as turned me out of them, Jacob Cromer, may God strike me dead if ever I cross your threshold again!"—

So horror-struck were both the Rector and his daughter by the coarse violence of this apostrophe, that the Squire had slammed the house-door after him and disappeared through the gate of the fore-court, before either recovered self-possession to look the other in the face.—

"My poor uncle must be out of his mind!" faltered Emma, who was the first to draw breath. "I have sometimes thought so before, when he was so violent without rhyme or reason against Deasmarsh!"—

"Out of his mind? No! he is *not* out of his mind! In *that* case I could forgive him!" ejaculated the Rector, struggling with his feelings. "But in cool blood, to advance such things against a child of mine!"—

"Dear father, compose yourself!" said

Emma, perceiving that the tears were starting from his eyes. "When my uncle comes to himself, he will feel how unjust he has been, and write you an apology."—

Jacob averted his head. He could not bear even his own dear little daughter to see how thoroughly he was cut up by such cruel conduct on the part of his brother.—

But even had the mind of the Squire been open to conviction, even had he possessed sufficient generosity to avow, *when* convicted, that he was in the wrong, no chance, at that moment, of a reaction of feeling! On his return home, he found his sons arrived from Cambridge, a couple of days sooner than he expected them; and, in the excitement of communicating to them the progress of his suits and grievances against the cotton-spinner, he lost sight of all the rest.—

The petty warfare of parish interests was fought over again and again after dinner, under the influence of the strong ale and

heady port which constituted the favourite beverage of Mr. Cromer; and when the indisposition which confined poor Magdalen to her room elicited a few expressions of regret on the part of her brothers, the Squire readily consoled them.

"Take no notice!" said he. "'Tis only one of the incalculable evils connected with Deasmarsh. My brother has espoused the cause of the Mordaunts so warmly as to cause a serious misunderstanding between us. I have made up my mind not to ever enter Jacob's house again. And Magdalen, who is fond of maundering and gossiping with her cousin, has taken the squabble to heart."—

Even to his sons, he did not choose to avow that he had hazarded a slanderous accusation against his niece, which had been distinctly disproved; not knowing that, having offences of their own to avow, and indulgence to seek, they were prepared to approve any

act short of wilful murder committed by their father.

Of poor Magdalen, meanwhile, the hours were passing miserably. Agitation of mind, supervening on prolonged exposure to weather the preceding day, had brought on a violent attack of fever; and her mother felt called upon to combat, with all the energies of her medicine-chest, a malady for which a few affectionate words would have afforded a more soothing remedy.—

She *did*, however, unwittingly afford some solace to the invalid, when visiting her chamber in the course of the evening, by replying, (when Magdalen alluded to the charges made against her cousin, with every intention of avowing all in case her father persisted in his accusation,) "Better dismiss the whole story from your mind, my dear;—better dismiss i from your mind! From what I can lear your father was misinformed. My brothe in-law spent the whole of yesterday with

daughter. Ralph Drewe, who raised the report, must have been drinking, as is often the case with him, and saw double."

"My uncle then is perfectly satisfied?"

"As regards Emma, perfectly!—He had a few words, I fancy, with your father. But only on account of those Mordaunts, who, one way or another, are perpetually stirring up strife in the parish."

Had poor Magdalen possessed in either of her brothers what could possibly be converted into a friend or counsellor, she would have profited by their arrival to endeavour to pacify the feud of which her indiscretion was the origin. But the young Cromers, reared with vulgar notions of self-consequence and deriving the sole interest that vivified their monotonous life at Deaswold from their father's factious war with the "cotton-spinner," were as well disposed as he could wish to second his aggressions.—Small as was her knowledge of the world, Magdalen had no diffi-

culty in understanding that, were she to select the present moment of general excitement for the declaration of her sentiments in favour of Reresby, some insult might possibly be offered which, between his high sense of honour and her brother's bullying disposition, could only be effaced with blood.

She determined, therefore, to wait;—to wait till she grew stronger and better able to meet reproach;—and, above all, to wait till she could secure a private interview with her kind uncle. Had such a man been her father, she had never have been guilty of the concealments that weighed so heavily on her conscience. But, even supported by his aid as a kinsman, she did not despair of making atonement and obtaining forgiveness.

The first visit of her brothers to her sick room afforded, meanwhile, some insight into the state of family politics. After Robert had demanded her congratulations on the re-fashionment of his dress and appearance,

which exhibited the transition of a boor into a "swell,"—a transformation about as pleasing as that of a tadpole into a frog,—and Stephen marked his contempt of his brother's pretensions by two or three growls of disgust in admirable keeping with the sullenness of his otherwise handsome countenance,—the younger brother saw fit to exhibit his amended perceptions of life by exclamations against the dulness of the Hall.

"I always thought Deaswold the most confoundedly slow place on earth!" cried he. —"But, if there were premiums for improvement in stupidity, hang me if it would not beat all competitors out of the field!"

"The place is what it always was!" retorted his brother, in a sulky tone. "It is *you* that are changed, Bob. A couple of terms at Cambridge have made you fancy yourself a fine gentleman."

The individual whose "gent-"ism was thus overrated, protested loudly against the charge.

"When I was a boy," argued he, though the hairs on his chin were still easy of enumeration,—"there was tolerable shooting on my father's estate.—Four days, at least, in the week, one was sure of sport.—But the railroad has cut up *that*. My father says that since the railroad was opened, his game has been gradually disappearing. And for the railroad, who have we to thank but Mr. Mordaunt!"

"You are paying Mr. Mordaunt a great compliment, Robert," said his sister mildly; "for every one admits that to the railroad is owing the present prosperity of Deaswold."

"What do you mean, Madge, by prosperity?" indignantly rejoined her elder brother. "Is the rent-roll of my father's estate increased?—Is he able to raise his rents?—Does he get a farthing a quarter more for his wheat?"—

"I allude rather to the general prosperity of the village. And the Hall has certainly become a pleasanter residence."

"A far more expensive one—if you call *that* pleasanter!—As my father says, 'nothing so expensive as sociability.'"

"Sociability!"—cried Robert, shrugging his shoulders. "What sociability has there been in the neighbourhood, since that vulgar fellow set foot in it?—Mordaunt decamped from Lancashire, only because his origin was a trifle too well known there to be agreeable; and that he might set up as a gentleman elsewhere."

"No thanks to him for giving the preference to Deaswold!" cried the sullen Squire-apparent.—"As we have no plague of engine-chimneys hereabouts, I don't see why we are to be infested by the order of people whom engine-chimneys worm up out of the mud!"—

"Mr. Mordaunt has done a great deal for our charitable institutions," meekly interposed the invalid.

"Of course he has!—If rich upstarts

didn't make *that* sacrifice, Madge, what *would* they be good for?"

"There are many old families—the Settringhams for instance—who do nothing of the kind," persisted Magdalen, gravely.

"Because they have their family consequence to keep up, and can't afford it. The Mordaunts are the sort of people who only get on in the world by bestowing broken victuals on the poor, and French dishes on the rich!"

"And the rich are not slow to profit by the advantage," observed his sister; "for the first people in the county have found their way to Deasmarsh."

"No, by Jove, not *all!*"—cried Bob, consequentially shaking his head.—"The Cromers of Cromer Hall neither have nor ever *will* set foot in the temple of Mammon!"

"*I* was alluding to the Duke of G—, to Lord Orton, and Lord Longueville,—the Lord Lieutenant and county members," said his sister, thus rashly furnishing a list of per-

sonages known to the Squire's family but by name, and to himself only at the crisis of a general election.

"I dare say!" — retorted her brother. "Turtle and venison afford as deadly a bait to fine folks, as soup-tickets to paupers!"

"Let us hope that many or most of those who show so much respect to Mr. Mordaunt," resumed his sister, "are influenced by knowing how much the pauperism of the district has been diminished by his interference. The neighbourhood is indebted to him for the railroad—"

"Planned for the benefit of his own property—."

"It *might* have been equally planned by my father—"

"My father had not sufficient parliamentary interest to carry it through."

"My father has had the same opportunities of being acquainted with the lord lieutenant and county members."

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"My father had not sufficient parliamentary interest to carry it through."

"My father has had the same opportunities of being acquainted with the lord lieutenant and county members."

" Ay, but not of getting them to play into his hand! The Duke's a Whig, and the cotton-spinner a Whig; and my father, thank GOD, a stanch TORY, and plain-sailing country Squire!" — cried the indignant Squireling. " The cotton-spinner will, maybe, be member for the county himself, one of these days, —for I hear he's buying up every acre of land he can lay his hands on, and scraping his foot to those who've got acres not to be bought. Or, (who knows in these topsy-turvy times?) perhaps, we may live to see him a peer of the realm and lord-lieutenant of the shire,—with a flag flying at Deasmarsh when the family's down; and have it called Deasmarsh Castle or Deasmarsh Abbey, or some confounded nonsense or other!—A pleasant sight, eh? for Cromer Hall (established on its hill since Henry the Seventh's time,) to have to look down on such an eyesore!"—

" Admit, at least, that it is pleasanter for Cromer Hall to look down on rich plantations

and a spreading lake, than upon the swampy meadows and broken fences of Smith's and Hutton's farm?" pleaded Magdalen, mistakenly fancying that, by such home-truths, she was advancing the cause of the Mordaunts.—"Surely the air of cheerfulness and activity which the creation of such a seat has produced in the district is—"

But her brothers refused to hear her to an end. The privilege of being a poor weak girl and an invalid, did not intitle her to utter such heresies."

"I'll tell you what, Madge," cried Robert, with a swaggering air. "It won't do to have enemies in the camp.—My uncle and his daughter have chosen to take up with the cotton-spinner; and the consequence is that *we* have chosen to lay them down. As far as I am concerned, not a word will I ever exchange with either of them. And if *you* are unnatural enough to turn against your own father and brothers, and follow the example

of the Rectory, egad, you must bide the consequence, and share their fate!"

"I have not turned against my father," faintly articulated Magdalen.—"I have no power to act; and even my opinion of Mr. Mordaunt's merits has never been expressed before."

"Then I promise you, you'd best keep it to yourself, both now and for ever!" cried her elder brother.—"My father's not a man to be trifled with, Madge.—And, from what I have heard him say, I'm convinced he'd make no bones of turning his back on any one of his children, girl or boy, maid or man, who sided with the blackguards at Deasmarsh!"—

CHAPTER XII.

I have consider'd well his loss of time,
And how he cannot be a perfect man,
Not being tried and tutor'd in the world.
Experience is by industry achiev'd,
And perfected by the swift course of time.
Then, tell me, whither were I best to send him?

SHAKSPEARE.

A couple of centuries ago, a Franciscan brother, travelling among the mountains of Styria, was taken ill and gave up the ghost in an obscure village, where his effects were appropriated by the innkeeper to defray the charge of his sickness and interment.

Among his belongings was a small black box, to which, in his lifetime, the deceased appeared to affix the highest value, and which consequently became the first spoil of the

cupidity of his host;—who, having locked himself into the chamber of the dead man, endeavoured to open the casket.—Ignorant of the secret of the spring-lock, he first attempted to peep into the box, by means of a little aperture, ringed with brass, inserted in the lid: when, lo! a shriek of horror summoned his whole household to his aid;—the treasure contained in the mysterious box being neither more nor less than the *Devil!*—

After a momentary glimpse of the horns and claws, the publican fell into a swoon.—

The inn was instantly deserted. Masses were said in the parish church, and messengers despatched to the Cardinal Archbishop of Salzburg, to inquire by whose hands the imprisoned fiend should be conveyed to Rome, to be delivered into the custody of his Holiness.—

Luckily, the head covered by the Cardinal's hat was as wise as it was pious. Instantly surmising that the Franciscan friar

was a naturalist, and the casket the then rare instrument familiar to us as the microscope, his Eminence despatched his secretary to the spot; to put an end to the exorcisms, and demonstrate to the simple population of the village that what they had mistaken for a devil was a harmless insect, whose feet and antennæ were magnified into horns and talons!—

By just such a process of magnification did the ignorance of Cromer Hall distort into monstrosity the simplest sayings and doings of the owner of Deasmarsh. Regarding as a state of virtue and beatitude the stagnation his activity had exploded, unconscious that movement and publicity are the soul of the century we live in, they did not *pretend* to believe, but actually *believed*, that evil intentions lurked at the bottom of all his beneficence.

"For some bad purpose worthy of his origin, the Man of Capital was trying to corrupt

the morals of the people by an insidious affectation of charity.

"When the dreadful day arrived for the outbreak of popular violence, which all thinking people knew to be surreptitiously preparing, the Duke and Lord-lieutenant and county members would open their eyes and perceive what they had been about, in consorting with one whose mind was a powder-magazine."

The stoves of the French cook, and the flag-staff into which the conductor affixed to the offices of Deasmarsh was metamorphosed, were not the worst offence of the new place. It was "a hotbed of sedition—a volcano slumbering for a time the better to discharge its fatal missiles, till, some day or other, the burning emissions would set the whole county in flames!"

Such were the ravings of the Squire, whenever he could obtain an auditory among the *dii minores* of the neighbourhood, consisting chiefly of the Northampton pettifogger, at

whose suggestion he waged his pounce and parchment warfare with Mordaunt, Ghrimes, and Co.,—two elderly spinsters of noble family, residing at a cottage of gentility in the adjacent village of Basinghill, who, shaken off as bores by their relations, were glad to enjoy an occasional orgie of weak tea and weaker talk at Cromer Hall; and a dull, formal Mr. Aristobulus Settringham, a cousin-german many times removed of Sir William, who, having officiated in his youth as secretary of legation to some infinitesimal German court, and given himself, on the strength of it, for the last fifty years, the airs of a diplomat, applauded as oracular the foolish sayings of the only man whose ignorance could be induced to treat him as a retired ambassador.

To Miss Moulsey and Miss Araminta Moulsey, who were as nervous as is customary with elderly spinsters dieted on tracts and saline draughts, Mr. Cromer's denunci-

ations conveyed serious uneasiness; and but that the attorney and old Aristobulus were at hand to satisfy them that the yeomanry cavalry of the county was still in commission, and that the assizes and episcopal visitations held their course, they would probably have been driven to emigration.

The meagre hospitalities at Cromer Hall, that led to these oracular displays of the Squire, being of rare occurrence, it was not such intimations of his continued animosity to the name of Mordaunt that Magdalen had most to fear. But her brothers were untirable in their attacks. There never passed a day, scarcely an hour, without some provoking allusion to the cotton-spinner.

With all due allowance, however, for their mortification at being crossed on the road by young Mordaunt, mounted on his fine hack, while they either trudged through the mud or jogged along on some brute as vicious as themselves, for which the Squire was unable

to obtain a market,—and seeing, whenever business took them to the railway-station, packet upon packet delivered to the Deasmarsh carters from noted gunsmiths, saddlers, cutlers, fishing-tackle makers, waterproof patentees—to say nothing of fashionable tailors, hatters, and hosiers—all requesting their wares to be kept dry and delivered immediately to the cotton-spinner's son and heir,—Magdalen felt that Stephen and Robert ought to be a little more forbearing.

To young men reared like the Cromers, with the notion of being the first in that part of the county, it was doubtless trying to see hats respectfully raised to the handsome Reresby, not only in the by-ways of their village but the highways of Northampton, while *they* skulked by unnoticed. But as this arose from the natural progress of the times rather than from assumption on the part of the Mordaunts, it was not fair to visit the mortification upon *them*.

She clothed her remonstrances, nevertheless, in the meekest language. But, whenever, either singly or together, her brothers were longer absent than usual from the Hall, the moments seemed to fall like droppings of molten lead; so persuaded was poor Magdalen that, sooner or later, these two violent young men would stimulate each other to some open demonstration of insolence towards one who, much as he would doubtless bear for her sake, was not to be insulted with impunity.

Sometimes, when follies and disgraceful connections of which she dreamed not, though within limit of the village, or some feigned errand, such as the pretence of wild duck shooting at a farm possessed by their father on the confines of Huntingdonshire, detained them from home, nothing would drive from her mind but that the report raised by Ralph Drewe had reached their ears, and that they had pursued their inqui-

ries at Deasmill till all had come to light! Already, perhaps, they had demanded explanation of Reresby!—Already, some hostile encounter might be arranged!—

Such were the ever-present anxieties of that gentle nature! The suddenness of her brother's arrival had forestalled those arrangements with Reresby, touching their future correspondence, which might have relieved her mind. Communication with *him*, either in person or by letter, was out of the question now that both were under the personal inquisition of their families; and never was fairy princess, however dragonishly guarded, more impossible of access than the Squire's daughter at the top of her dreary hill. A messenger could not have reached her nearer than the park-palings without detection.

It was only on the Sabbath—it was only when the two families, so unchristianly inimical, were gathered together under the roof of the House of God,—that the conscience-

stricken girl enjoyed the happiness of knowing that she breathed the same atmosphere with him to whom she had pledged her faith. Even then, the consciousness of her fault prevented her enjoying, as Reresby did, the momentary glance that, however blameful the impulse sanctioning its sacrilegious joy, satisfied him of the presence of her for whom he would have renounced his happiness in this world and inheritance in the next.

Meanwhile, the return of the Mordaunts to their charming home, was as satisfactory as is usually the case where there exists no drawback on the conscience or the purse. Served by first-rate tradesmen and first-rate domestics, Mr. Mordaunt found his orders punctually obeyed during his absence. Though winter was come, the produce of spring and summer awaited his arrival. For the Christmas party about to assemble under his roof, the magic of wealth had worked its usual wonders.

But, to the master's eyes, *this* was not the pleasantest aspect of Deasmarsh. It was not even the satisfactory report of his land-steward and bailiffs that caused so exulting an expression to glitter in the eye of the Man of Capital, when seated once more at the head of a board so differently served from that he had left behind. He was happy—*how* happy!—In the course of the following week, the son whom he so loved,—the son who was likely to reflect such honour on the name he bore,—the son who, though he had taken first-class honours at the University, was as little of a pedant as his plain-spoken father, was to assume his seat in Parliament, and with prospects that caused his excellent father's heart to sing for joy!—

"I congratulate you, my dear boy!" said he, when the disappearance of Mrs. Mordaunt and her daughter after dinner, on the day of his arrival at home, left them to the discussion of an excellent bottle of claret, such as,

out of compliment to the tastes or prejudices of his quondam partner, old Freshley, he had abjured for many weeks past, "I wish you a thousand times joy!—After all, the little wife to whom I have been looking forward with such anxious feelings, turns out exactly what we could wish. Never did I see a more charming little girl."

Without a suspicion to what little wife, or what little girl, his father might be alluding, poor Reresby, whose thoughts were dedicate to one who had the form of a grace, but the height and port of a muse, involuntarily glanced towards the silver claret pitcher; wishing, for once, that its opacity did not prevent his ascertaining to what amount the disappearance of the fragrant Château Latour that glowed within accounted for the strangeness of his companion.—Mr. Mordaunt's wits seemed to have taken leave of him.

"Your mother and sister have always endeavoured to raise misgivings in my mind,"

continued the happy father, little dreaming to what conjectures he was giving rise. "They were afraid that, educated as she has been, she might turn trivial and vulgar,—above all, self-sufficient and overbearing. So far from which, I never saw a more humble-minded little creature. Instead of the heiress of hundreds and thousands, you might fancy her the parson's daughter of Deaswold!"—

"Of whom are you talking, my dear father?"—inquired Reresby,—the imputation of vulgarity instantly bringing the Freshleys to his mind; and with them, horrible surmises of the truth.

"Of the girl who will make you the happiest of men, and enable you to do credit to a position to the duties of which you are by anticipation devoting yourself!"—said Mordaunt, again filling his own glass and that of his son. "By marrying Claudia Freshley, my dear boy, you will be able to start in London with an income of between five and six thou-

sand a year. And from all I have seen of the world, Reresby, I am compelled to admit that a man never takes a superior place in public life, who is poorly off in private."

"Do you mean, sir," said Reresby, every vestige of colour suddenly forsaking his cheeks,—"that, without the slightest warning, you have planned a marriage for me?—that you have chosen a wife as you negociated for my seat in parliament?"—

"You speak, my boy, as if you almost fancied yourself ill used by having a hundred thousand pounds thrust into your pocket!" rejoined his father, a little astonished.

"Not *ill* used,—but injudiciously used; if, as I almost fear, you have taken serious steps in this matter," replied Reresby, in a steady voice.

"I don't know what you mean by *serious* steps.—Marriage-settlements cannot be executed without your signature. Nor can any one promise and vow in your name, as at your

baptism, that you will love poor little Claudia for richer for poorer, for better for worse.—But it is now more than three years since Freshley proposed the match to me; when I answered that, if it could be brought about, it would have my warmest consent."

"*If* it could be brought about," added Reresby,—in a less assured tone.

"And from that day to this," added his father, "I have looked forward with the most earnest desire to the accomplishment of our project."

"Three years!—yet, till this day, to give me no intimation of your wishes! And I, who fancied that your whole heart was open to me!" exclaimed Reresby, in a tone of deep emotion.

"The heart of one individual is never *wholly* open to another; as no one, my dear son, knows better than yourself!" rejoined Mr. Mordaunt. "There is always some corner or another doubled down,—for discretion sake,

or in *justice* to the claims of other people. The most confiding parent or candid friend has a right to choose for his disclosures the moment he believes to be most advantageous to the accomplishment of his wishes."

Young Mordaunt replied only by a groan.

"If I abstained from discussing this most eligible connection with you previous to your starting on your travels," resumed Mr. Mordaunt, "it was that you might view the world with an unshackled eye. I wished you to feel perfectly free. While you were away, I watched your letters with anxiety, to detect the slightest indication of a preference in the countries you were visiting; and your lively allusions to black, brown, and fair, afforded me a sufficient guarantee that you were heart-whole.—On your return, I cross-questioned you, and was still at ease. But, lest my wishes should mislead me, I even wrote to your friend Sir Herbert Glynne, inquiring whether there were any drawback abroad

to your forming a happy English marriage."

"And even Glynne never let me into the secret!"

"No secret was confided to him. So much, in fact, was he deceived, that I am satisfied he fancied, on arriving here, that my matrimonial scheme referred to the little girl at the Rectory,—a match wholly unsuited to you in every respect."

"What led you to think so?"

"The interest with which he regarded her. It may not have occurred to *you*, who were indifferent on the subject. But I promise you that for many days after his arrival at Deasmarsh, he was perpetually watching Emma Cromer, to determine whether she were worthy of his friend."

"And why, oh! *why*, my dear father, did you not undeceive him and tell him the truth!" cried Reresby.

"Because we were still uncertain of

Claudia. Your mother was anxious that nothing should be irrevocably decided till she was grown up and we could be personally satisfied of her qualification to do honour to your name. But now that she finds her all we could wish, — pretty, good-humoured, devoid of pretension—"

"Yes, yes!—I see!—a Manchester Miss—with white teeth,—rosy cheeks,—and cherry coloured ribands,"—cried young Mordaunt, impatiently shrugging his shoulders.

"You do not estimate at a *very* high rate, Reresby, the taste of your mother!"

"At all events, sir, I hope that, in the warmth of her enthusiasm for this Lancashire heiress, she may not have gone so far as to apprize *her* of your scheme?"—

"When women get together, it is hard to say where their confidences begin and end," replied his father, a little relieved. "Claudia and Matilda appeared so perfectly to understand each other, that I conclude it was

with the prospect of becoming sisters-in-law."

"How unfair, — how unkind, — to write with such apparent unconcern about this girl's beauty and improvement, without giving me the smallest clue to—"

"Find no fault with your sister on that score, my dear boy!" interrupted Mr. Mordaunt. "It was by my express desire that no hint was afforded you. In affairs of the heart, I know the contrariety of human nature. Certain loves, like certain flowers, will not flourish under culture. If touched by the hand, they wither."

"Metaphors are deceitful arguments, my dear father," was the grave reply of poor Reresby. "The best way of dealing with rational beings, is by appealing to their reason. Had I been acquainted with your wishes, I should have been on my guard against forming other attachments."

"You *have* formed other attachments,

then?" demanded Mr. Mordaunt, with a sudden contraction of countenance.

"I have."

"And it was perhaps on that account you objected to accompanying us into Lancashire?"

"It was."

"The object of your attachment resides, then, in this neighbourhood?"—continued Mr. Mordaunt. "I might have guessed it!—All the vexations of my otherwise prosperous life,—all the briars entangling my pleasant path,—are fated to spring from the same hateful source!—Those confounded—those contemptible Cromers!"—

Reresby sat silenced. Intemperance of speech was a thing so unusual with his father, that he judged it better not to aggravate him by self-defence.

"A race of insignificant people," resumed the angry man, "without energy to distinguish themselves from the clods from which

they derive their subsistence! A race which has clung to the soil of Deaswold like the oak-apple to its oak,—only to deteriorate the parent stock:—poor, without talent or spirit to enrich themselves;—obscure, without containing within themselves the germ of ennoblement;—unable to advance either their own interest or those of their dependents; and still more incapable of extending their ideas or even their desires to the advancement of the country or amelioration of the human race!"

Still, his son answered not a word. For some such expansion of indignation he was fully prepared.

"After all I have achieved for my children, I had surely a right to form ambitions for them!" resumed Mordaunt, as if reconcentrating his thoughts aloud. "Mine is not a fortune lazily transmitted from sire to son, by hands too inert to do more than clench their hereditary havings. *I* have *worked* for

all I enjoy;—worked with my hands, and worked with my head:—been astir with the sun and wakeful in the watches of the night:—which intitles me, I think, to exact something in exchange for the situation to which I elevate my successors. Yet your sister wantonly refuses the hand of a young man devotedly attached to her, the representative of one of the first houses in the county, and of high and unblemished character, simply because his way of entering a room and making a bow does not take her fancy!"—

"Matilda, then, has again refused George Melfont?" inquired young Mordaunt.

"Again, and in terms so decided as to close the door against all renewal of his suit;—nay, I fear, to cut short all further intimacy between the families."

"George Melfont is a worthy creature," said Reresby, glad to have attained a subject on which he had courage to open his lips,

"but not exactly calculated to engage a woman's eye."

"Her eye?"—cried Mr. Mordaunt, in a rage —"Where is the use of such an understanding as Matilda's, if her affections depend on mere extrinsic advantages? George Melfont is upright, honourable, well-affectioned. Independent of his noble position, he would have made her an excellent husband."

"Not if she could not bring herself to *like* him, my dear father!" argued Reresby, with firmness. "A romantic passion may not be indispensable to the happiness of married life. But repugnance is an insuperable obstacle. Be candid with yourself.—Would the laborious life you have led have been supportable, had you not been married to a woman to whom you were fervently attached? Or, would your present state of prosperity possess half its charm, were it not shared by her with whom you have passed hand in hand through life,—the object of your unshackled

choice, and consequently of your continued love and veneration?"

"Do not cite your mother as an example, Reresby," said old Mordaunt, with deep feeling. "There is not such another woman in the world! To bring *her* name into question is profanation. Lay not your hand on the ark of the covenant!"

"Just so, would I fain speak to my own children of my wife!" cried his son, with equal enthusiasm;—"which could never be the case, sir, were my domestic affections withered by an interested and distasteful marriage."

"And do you imagine, then, that, when the charm of youth and prettiness is gone, there will be anything in the little whiffling childfaced daughter of our good Rector, to excuse the want of fortune and want of consideration that will weigh down into nothingness the best years of your life, and perhaps induce you to look forward to my death as a term of enlargement?"—cried

Mr. Mordaunt, with a look of pity and disgust.

"The daughter of the *Rector?*"—exclaimed Reresby, in his turn, in a tone of such unfeigned amazement that his father saw in a moment there was some misunderstanding between them.

"Why, did you not just now tell me that you were reluctant to accompany us into Lancashire, because the object of your preference resided hereabouts?"

Reresby was affirmatively silent.

"And to whom *but* Emma Cromer could you allude? I will not believe, Reresby, that you have derogated to some person of whom your education and habits of life render you the superior. You can scarcely have taken a fancy to one of those old Moulsey hags at Basinghill. And whom else, is there, betwixt this and Northampton?"

To Mr. Mordaunt's great surprise, his son hesitated to reply.

"With the family at Cromer Hall, thanks be to Heaven," said the old man fervently, "you have no acquaintance! For, sooner than see you united to the offspring of so much malignity, intolerance, meanness, and pride, as the Almighty hears and judges me, I would—"

"My dear, *dear* father," interrupted Reresby, rising and throwing his arms around his father, as he would have done in his boyish days, "spare me a hasty denunciation such as we could never recall!—Be forbearing!—Do not drive me to extremities? Fail not in your usual tender mercy, and I will never, dear father, *never* fail in my duty."

"It *is* then the daughter of the man who has spat upon your father, and endeavoured to trample your family into the dust, to whom you have attached yourself?" faltered Mordaunt, utterly overcome.

"It *is* the daughter of Mr. Cromer of Cromer Hall,—a being as different from her odious father as—"

Instead of proceeding, Reresby Mordaunt was forced to relinquish his hold upon *his*, whose struggles to release himself from his son's embrace had suddenly ceased, and snatch a glass of water from the table to hold to his lips.—The strong man was reduced to the weakness of a woman.—Tears glittered in his eyes.—His pale lips quivered with emotion.—With much difficulty he struggled with his feelings, so as to escape utter unconsciousness.

"Not another word to-night, dear sir, I beseech you!" said his son, who had never before seen him so deeply affected.—"We are neither of us in a state for argument. Give me your hand, dearest father, as an assurance that you cherish no rancour against me."—

Mr. Mordaunt silently extended his hand. It was plain that the anguish within was too bitter for words.

"And in return, accept my promise," continued his son, pressing that venerated hand

fondly between his own,—"that I will take no step in this matter without previously consulting you.—Nothing, sir, believe me, has occurred that ought to shake the confidence between us."

"Not when you placed in the hands of my only enemy a sword to drive into my heart?" faltered poor Mordaunt—still ghastly from the effects of the shock.

"As yet, not a single human being, excepting Magdalen and myself, is aware of what has passed.—Old Cromer knows not so much as that we are acquainted."

"Then there is still hope!"—was the secret ejaculation of the unhappy father. And he was no longer slow in placing his hand in that of Reresby, while acceding to his entreaties that all further discussion of the business should be deferred till to-morrow.

CHAPTER XIII.

Eftsoons, both flower and garland far away
She flung, and her faire dewy locks yrent,
To sorrow huge she turned her former play,
And gamesome mirth to grievous detriment.
SPENSER.

The morrow brought mutual explanations, which, if less stormy, were scarcely less unsatisfactory. After narrating his accidental introduction at the Rectory to Jacob Cromer's niece, it was difficult for Reresby to account for the rapid growth of intimacy between them without compromising, in the eyes of his father, the delicacy and discretion of her whom he was pledged to make his wife. As far as possible, he took upon himself the blame; spoke of his chance meetings with Magdalen in her daily walks, and even of his intrusions into the grounds at Cromer

Hall. But of Deasmill, he said not a word. Avowals which would probably have satisfied Mr. Mordaunt that the honour of his son was irrevocably pledged, were injudiciously withheld.

In the conviction, therefore, that his son was touched only by the romance of the moment, and that a prepossession so rashly formed would be as rapidly surmounted, the prudent father exacted that Reresby should grant a year's trial to the strength of attachment.

"If at the expiration of a twelvemonth," said he, "you still assert a marriage with Mr. Cromer's daughter to be essential to your happiness, my consent, however reluctantly granted, shall not be wanting."

At a sentence so much more lenient than he had anticipated, the sanguine young man was beginning to expand into rapturous expressions of gratitude; when his father somewhat drily interrupted him.

"Do not thank me too soon!" said he. "My concession is not unconditional. Under any circumstances, my dear boy, you would have quitted Northamptonshire next week; having to show yourself at Castle Dangan, preparatory to taking your seat at the meeting of Parliament. But, as matters stand, I shall require you to start for town to-morrow by the mail-train. Notwithstanding my causes of enmity against Mr. Cromer, I feel it my duty as a father to interdict all further intercourse between you and his daughter, till you are able to go straight to her parents, like an honest man, and ask them for her hand."

"All further intercourse, *even by letter?*"

"If you are wise, even by letter! For, should your clandestine correspondence fall into the hands of the family, so far from sanctioning the marriage they might exact as an *amende honorable*, I should absolutely refuse my consent. You will, therefore, I

conclude, perceive the wisdom of forbearance."

In vain did Reresby attempt to plead the cause of Magdalen.—For Mr. Cromer's daughter, Mordaunt found no pity in his heart.

"Don't talk to me about her delicacy of feeling!" cried he. "You have known each other, Reresby, but a couple of months.—The whole affair is a romantic adventure, such as every now and then befals every young man of your age, who finds a pretty girl imprudent enough to listen to his addresses.—No, no! Miss Cromer's affections *cannot* be *very* deeply engaged."

Reresby of course thought otherwise; and plausible enough were the arguments by which he strove to convince his father that she who had confided her happiness to his keeping was a girl of no ordinary merit, of no common strength of mind.

"Let her prove it!" was Mr. Mordaunt's rejoinder. "I shall require some little evi-

dence of the fact before I reward her with the hand of such a son as mine. If her love for him will not hold out against a year's absence—"

"And cessation of correspondence," interrupted Reresby in a lower voice.

"—it is not worth the suing for!" added his father. "Meanwhile, she suffers no injury at your hands. The abrupt termination of your clandestine courtship is a benefit rather than otherwise; and as no one is aware that you are so much as acquainted, no slight will be thrown upon her by your departure."

"At all events, my dear father," said young Mordaunt with deep feeling, "promise me to respect her secret—even as regards her uncle—even as regards my mother?"

"Even as regards your mother!" solemnly responded his father.

"And that, should chance throw you together, your manner towards Magdalen will

denote no resentment of what has occurred?"

And again, the prudent father satisfied him by complete acquiescence; after which, what more was to be urged—what more to be argued? All that remained for the young man was to hasten his departure. Like a convict, he was perhaps in hopes of getting his period of punishment abridged by prompt submission and good conduct.

To convey furtively a letter of explanation to Magdalen, now that her brothers were at the Hall and like other idle country gentlemen perpetually on the prowl, was out of the question. Even the one he entrusted to old Mrs. Clemson, to be delivered sooner or later as occasion presented itself, would perhaps never reach its destination! But to attempt more than this hazardous despatch, had been an infringement of his compact with his father.

As young Mordaunt cantered along the

valley dominated by Cromer Hall, on his way to the Station the following day, never had that staring ungainly structure looked half so offensive in his eyes as now, when its mean self-sufficiency, the origin of all his woes, seemed to look down exultingly upon his departure !—

So true, alas ! to the grievous contrarieties of human fortune is the axiom of La Bruyère, that " the things of which we are most desirous never come to pass, or come to pass at a time and under circumstances that rob them of half their charm !" For Reresby Mordaunt, for whom every thing connected with his entrance into Parliament had once assumed an all-absorbing interest, was literally proceeding to his borough with his pockets heavy with corruption to secure his return, and his heart heavier than his pockets.

On the other hand, upon hearing the railway shriek announce the departure of the train that conveyed him away, that of his

father became inexpressibly lightened. To get him safe off was something; and though the contending passions of two young hearts were principles of action with which he felt himself incompetent to deal, Mr. Mordaunt was not the man to sit fretting over an evil not altogether hopeless.

His first care was to ask of the Freshleys the same concession he had required from his son,—*viz.*, a year's patience.

"It was desirable," he said, "that the tyro in parliamentary life should not have his time bespoken, in the onset of his public career, by those duties of domestic life, which he should think ill of Reresby if he did not for a time find all in all. — A year hence, the new member would be at better leisure for a honeymoon."

And while eagerly awaiting a reply to the only Jesuitical epistle he had ever indited in his life,—a letter such as nothing but conviction that the well-being of his family was in-

volved in the fruition of his plans, would have induced him to write,—he took occasion to hint to Mrs. Mordaunt and Matilda, as a first step towards still further estrangement from the Cromers, his desire that the closeness of their connection with the Rectory might be, in some degree, modified.

For this apparent inconsistency of purpose, politics afforded a ready pretext.

"The contentions of political life," said he, "are likely to become of too stirring a nature for a Liberal like myself, and a Conservative like my good friend the parson, to meet over their wine without something as nearly amounting to a squabble as the colour of his cloth will admit. And now that Reresby's doings are about to be added to my sayings, and that my son's name will be seen daily in the list of those whom the worthy Jacob does not hesitate to treat of as enemies to Church and State, we are not likely to come to a better understanding."

His proposal found ready acquiescence. Emma was no longer the helpless motherless girl in whose favour, on arriving at Deasmarsh, Mrs. Mordaunt had made it a duty to feel interested; nor was Matilda sorry to be relieved from hollow demonstrations of goodwill towards one whom she regarded as her successful rival with Sir Herbert Glynne.

To fulfil the wishes of Mr. Mordaunt without offering offence to the man whose worthiness as a parish priest was as fully admitted by the family as though his politics had been less narrow and his connection with Cromer Hall less close, was not difficult. The Rector had always conditioned to be invited to Deasmarsh when the family was alone; and a large party was shortly afterwards to assemble under its hospitable roof precisely of the kind he was disposed to avoid.

A single Sabbath intervened; when Mr. Mordaunt, albeit usually a devout attendant at divine service, could not refrain from

glancing across the chancel towards the pew occupied by the family of the lord of the manor, in order to form some estimate of the amount of his son's danger, and of Magdalen Cromer's charms.—He even experienced something almost amounting to a quickened pulsation of heart, at the idea of being perhaps about to look face to face on his future daughter-in-law.

But his emotions were thrown away. No Magdalen was there. Her father, in pursuance of his unbrotherly resentments, had hit upon what *he* considered the greatest insult in his power to offer to his brother, by transferring to the adjacent parish of Basinghill the seat of his devotion. Having issued an ukase commanding his sons and servants not to set foot in Deaswold Church again without his especial sanction, he profited by the permission often pressed upon him by the Miss Moulseys to take possession of the right wing of the long rambling pew railed and wain-

scoted with carved oak, in which the spinsters were accustomed to enjoy their weekly slumbers, and cultivate their annual lumbago.

When Mr. Mordaunt looked anxiously about him, therefore, at Deaswold, his expectations were frustrated. The Cromer Hall pew, above which, aforetime, the rosy faces of the little Cromers were seen to cluster like strawberries piled over a pottle, and which, since the return of the family from Clifton, lacked the presence of the lovely girl whose mourning weeds were less black than the raven braids that enframed a brow as spotless as her broad-hemmed lawn, was as empty as a poor-box !—

For poor Emma to have lost sight at once of the two objects dearest to her on earth—the fickle Romeo of Deasmarsh and the cousin Magdalen who was dearer still, — was almost enough to refrigerate her devotions ! Even had her intended ostracism from Deasmarsh been whispered at that moment into her

ear, she would scarcely have given it a thought.

Nothing more common in this world of grumbling and discontent than to hear people rail against the abuses of society or the dulness of daily life, without taking heed how much of the blame rests with themselves. What, for instance, would the squatters in the Prairies, repining after intercourse with their kind,—what would the wanderers in Australia,—what would the solitary English Rajah of Samarák say to the unchristianly and unsocial feeling evinced by three opulent English families, like those of Deaswold, settled in a beautiful rural district, blessed with promising children and excellent health, who, instead of loving one another, each as himself,—instead of doing to each other each as he would be done by,—instead of intercommunicating with cheerful sociability for the general good,—abided in their several homes, sullen, alienated, and resentful!—

The traveller skimming that happy valley, and beholding the chimneys of Deasmarsh, Cromer Hall, and the Rectory, smoking above the trees, would scarcely have credited such inhospitable estrangement; so pleasantly did the frame of the fair landscape appear to unite into one community the manorial proprietor, the wealthy trader, and the priest by whose instruction and guidance they were to find one common path through the cares and duties of this world to the frontier of a better land.

But is this bitterness of rare occurrence in civilized life? Even among the children of one mother, do not strifes and envyings too often prevail? Alas! it needs no *very* extensive journey through the best legislated country in Europe to find as many country neighbourhoods distracted like Deaswold by private feuds and petty factions, as, in more heroic times, would have supplied *virus* for the siege of Troy!—

The disunion of the neighbourhood was, however, happily imperceptible to the gay party assembled by the Mordaunts for Christmas holidays. To the London guests, indeed, it was a relief to find the house unincumbered with country neighbours; and even Sir John and Lady Mary Grovynor Grovynor, who, inhabiting the further extremity of the county, had a vague notion (such as it becomes a well-estated baronet and county member to derive from assiduous study of his county history) that the manor of Deaswold pertained to an ancient family of the name of Cromer,—obtained for answer to their inquiries only that the present representative of the family led a life of complete seclusion; and as, after the laudable custom of Deasmarsh, the party assembled on the Monday was to disperse on the Saturday following, in order that the sabbath observances of the family might undergo no infringement, there was no chance of awkward ques-

tions concerning the Rector and his daughter.

The Grovynors, who, on becoming acquainted with the Mordaunt family at Lord Melfont's, had been so captivated by the open manners and clear-mindedness of the *novus homo* as instantly to invite him to Grovynor Chase, were enchanted, meanwhile, with all they heard and saw in his well-ordered domain. Practical people, and piquing themselves upon being, in the best sense of the word, "children of the century," instead of proving their affiliation by the adoption of a jargon, half-slang, half-foreign, and, like the serpent-charmers of the East, eliciting an evil spirit from things innocent and harmless,—the baronet and his patrician dame occupied themselves in applying to the benefit of their property, and embellishment of their existence, every improvement and innovation of the day.

Their only fault was, that they did their spiriting a little too fussily. Lady Mary was

a dreadful "manager;" and her new systems worked as stiff at Grovynor Chase as the machinery of a new pantomime. Thanks to her anxiety to do things better and quicker by patent process than other people,—to eat her strawberries a day earlier and her green peas a month later,—to light the fire in her drawing-room by instantaneous-ignition-fuel, and communicate between the housekeeper's room and kitchen-garden by means of an electric telegraph,—it was as dangerous to spend a few days at the Chase as to inaugurate a railroad.

The Settringhams, on the other hand, who, in the true spirit of their order, regarded the taste for patent improvements exhibited by Mordaunt as a disease peculiar to new people and manufacturers, were inexpressibly startled at finding a baronet of 1666 suffering from the infection; and it was as much as Sir William Settringham could do, when alone with Sir John Grovynor Grovynor, to abstain

from asking him whether he had taken the malady naturally, or by inoculation.

The old gentleman had in fact scarcely felt the turrets of Settringham Abbey to be safe over his head, since he heard of the massive brass dogs at the Chase giving place to Arnott's stoves, and tons of Wenham Lake ice being deposited in a Great British ice-house;—and it was something very like fear lest the contagion his nature had resisted from the cotton-spinner should be more readily communicated by a brother-baronet, which caused poor Sir William to fill his gloomy old mansion with Christmas visitors, as a pretext for not joining the more brilliant conclave at Deasmarsh.

Guests, however, were not wanting; guests whose names the daily papers delight in printing in their columns, as interesting to the vulgar eye or embalmed in the public heart. The party was not composed, after the fashion of Christmas parties, of learned pundits who, like Cuvier, when shown the tooth of an ante-

diluvian animal, can describe and reconstruct even the minutest articulation of the entire beast, and go the whole mastodonton; or conversation-men, who put down their puns and witticisms for Christmas consumption as East India purveyors preserve Dorking fowls and sirloins of beef in the Strand to be eaten fresh at Hong Kong,—invited to divert the leisure of the noble lords whom it is their pride and glory to entertain;—royal highnesses delighting in musical prodigies, or musical prodigies who tune up their bravuras, or commit some other harmonious nuisance only at the solicitation of royal highnesses;—or lounging honourables, with portfolios of caricatures filled at the cost of successive country visits, with the snobs of Hertfordshire villas or cits of Surrey hunting-boxes, set down in malice for the diversion of the lordly parks of Yorkshire, *à charge de revanche*;—or noble blocks from the clubs, prepared to take off a photographic facsimile of the company,

to be circulated gratis in St. James's Street, on their return to town.—The little group consisted of men of high personal distinction —connected with Mr. Mordaunt by the activities of public life or interests of commercial speculation;—of whom chancellors of the Exchequer seek audiences as often as they are solicited to grant them to other people.

"I wonder where the seven-leagued boots of this cotton-spinning rascal will stop!" exclaimed the Squire's younger son one evening, beside the meagre tea-table of Cromer Hall, with its Wedgwood service of blue and white crockery, and teapot of silver paper, on which the Cromer arms were pompously engraven on a mantle large enough for the state coach of the Lord Mayor. "Hilshere, the turnpike man, told me this morning that no fewer than seven carriages and four had passed through to Deasmarsh since Christmas-day!"—

"Much good may they do the fellow!" was the surly rejoinder of the Squire. "I

should be sorry to pay for the commons of such locusts. But new people are apt to think the company of fine folks cannot be bought too dear."

"It seems odd, however," observed the eldest son, "that, with such families as the Grovyno Grovynors, and Lord and Lady William Apreece, and the Solicitor-General, and Archdeacon Harris, and I know not who besides, staying at his father's house, the young Marquis of Flue (as Aristobulus Settringham calls young Mordaunt) should choose to be away from home."

"Considering 'tis the first Christmas he's been in England since Deasmarsh was finished, it *is* rather strange," rejoined his mother, not noticing that poor Magdalen was filling a cup of tea for her father out of the tea-urn instead of the teapot.

"You and Stephen give pretty plain proof that you never read the newspaper!" sneered the Squire, who seldom allowed the London

papers to escape out of his study till they were a week old (as though the economy of dieting his family on stale bread had inspired him with a notion that anything but stale news must be wasteful.) "As long ago as the Standard of Tuesday last," which was still safe under the mohair cushion of his library-chair! "you might have learned that young Mordaunt has just been pitchforked into Parliament."

"Into parliament?—with scarcely a hair on his chin!" exclaimed the demure Mrs. Cromer, whose notions were grounded upon the gray-bearded representatives of her native county — the only members on whom her eyes had ever rested.

"Now-a-days, *young* members are the fashion!" retorted the Squire, with a still bitterer sneer, "as any one might guess by the measures they foist upon the country! Young England, as it calls itself, is pricking up its ears,—and pretty long ones they are;

and I suppose this young sprig of a cotton-spinner will soon be adding *his* hee-haw to the rest!"

"I thought I understood, sir, from my uncle Jacob, that Mr. Mordaunt's politics were liberal?" interposed Magdalen, who certainly understood nothing very clearly at that moment—so overjoyed was she at this explanation of an absence which, for a fortnight past, had not a little increased the redness of her eyes and hollowness of her cheeks.

"*Radical*, you mean!—Mordaunt would be a Chartist and Socialist, if it wasn't for the thousands he has managed to scrape together. Mordaunt is democrat to the backbone! But it does not follow that the gosling should cackle in the same gamut as the gander. The Gazette announced him as returned for the borough of Castle Dangan, in that part of the united kingdom called Ireland. Now, as old Mordaunt has no connection of any sort or kind with Ireland," continued the Squire,

as dictatorially as though he were not talking like an ignoramus — "depend upon it, the young gentleman has been smuggled into parliament by some of his college friends."

"Mordaunt lived entirely among the nobs when he was at Trinity," added Robert Cromer. "He had the name, at Cambridge, of being quite an out-and-outer!"—

"And, ten to one, will think it a genteel thing to cut the old cotton-spinner's opinions, —and maybe his acquaintance," chuckled the elder brother, to whom the handsome Reresby was an object of aversion.

"I could find it in my heart to forgive him *that!*" said the Squire. "A vote on the right side is never to be sneezed at."

"We shall soon see!" cried Bob. "Parliament meets on the 20th (doesn't it, sir?) and the first political question will decide the thing."

"Why, as the youngest member of the House, he'll surely have to move the address?" said Stephen, doubtingly.

"No, he won't. It's only in the House of Lords the last peer that took his seat moves the address," replied Bob, with a knowing nod.

"Stuff and nonsense!" retorted Stephen.

"But I tell you it *is* so!" cried Bob, growing as scarlet as the coat, little dreamed of by the Squire, in which, despite his clerical prospects, he occasionally figured at Cambridge. "I've heard young Hogg say so scores of times; and *he's* a member's son, you know, and must be up to the thing."

"Young Hogg's a prime blockhead!" was the polite rejoinder of his brother. And the argument was forthwith pursued between them with a degree of noise and acrimony, under cover of which, it was not difficult for Magdalen to steal out of the room, in a breathless search after Tuesday's Standard.

So suddenly deprived of all intercourse with the object of her affection, so utterly ignorant of his projects and whereabout, it was some-

thing to read his name in print, as returned for the borough of Castle Dangan !—To *her*, those few words conveyed a certificate of his existence. To be returned to parliament sounded to the simple-minded Magdalen, at the top of the hill where she was stranded, like the ark on Ararat, out of reach of the striving tides of civilization, as if the man she loved were taken bodily by the hand and placed upon a bench in the House of Commons.

He *must* be well—he *must* be thriving,—since a discerning constituency had found means to convert him into an M.P. !—

CHAPTER XIV.

Ce n'est pas dans les momens d'énergie que l'on s'occupe des autres temps ou des autres hommes. On ne commande pas à ses idées, ou ne veut pas réfléchir, on ne demande pas à son esprit d'approfondir une matière, de découvrir de choses cachées, de trouver ce qui n'a pas été dit. On *rêve*, —on ne médite point.

SENANCOURT.

He *was* both well and thriving. Whether owing to the "nine times nine and one cheer more," with which, on occasion of his new honours, his health was drunk at his father's table, not only by his own family but by the Grovynor Grovynors, the Solicitor-General, Lord and Lady William Apreece, and sundry other notabilities, and the triumph with which the same toast was echoed over its ale by the servants' hall; or whether to the contemptuous tone in which his entrance into parlia-

ment was discussed at Cromer Hall, at its next tea-drinking, by the Basinghill tabbies and the soured old bachelor ambitious to pass for an Excellency; — certain it was, that never was Reresby Mordaunt in better case than when he entered the Travellers' Club, arm in arm with Sir Herbert Glynne, on the evening of the meeting of parliament, to preface his cigar with a sherry-cobbler.

To a man under five-and-twenty, life can be readily made to assume a new aspect. As a child who hails as permanent every fitful gleam of sunshine brightening some dreary valley, every new object has interest in his eyes. He had been presented that morning to some dozen or so of desirable acquaintances. He had been claimed as an old acquaintance by as many more schoolfellows or college chums, desirous of ranking among his friends. But this was not all. The meeting of parliament had been brilliantly attended; not alone by the noble dames privileged by

right of peerage to witness the delivery of the speech from the throne, but by a throng of fashionable beauties, eager, at that dead season of the year, to exhibit themselves wherever admiring eyes were gathered together.

Now, though Reresby had taken his share in balls, banquets, and midnight masquerades, both in Paris, Naples, and Vienna; though he had "swum in a gondola" on the Brenta, and serenaded under the balconies of Seville, it was the first time he had been present in a numerous assembly of his fair countrywomen of the patrician order. It was the first time he had ever seen the mantling bloom of English beauty, or the guileless expression of countenance (so remarkable in the daughters of Albion), attired in satin robes and diamond tiaras, and the modest dignity of deportment more distinguishing than either. And, though he might have disowned it, even to himself, his eyes were dazzled by the spectacle.

The quiet self-consciousness of those beautiful women imposed upon him. He beheld in them worthy partners for life for men whose deeds are heroic or whose deliberations beneficial to mankind—the great men of the kingdom, whether in the field or cabinet. They were, in short, something above what he had yet connected in his dreams with the attributes of the sex. Though Magdalen might be equally fair, he could not picture to himself *one* of *them* meeting him among the nettles and alder-bushes of Deasmill!

As a tyro on entering a sculptor's studio, or even the workshop of some mechanical art, is apt to overrate the mere dexterity of experience, the usage of the world of a few high-bred women appeared to his unpractised eye a personal accomplishment. The youthful sovereign, in all the glory of her throne, and the beautiful Marchioness and Viscountess in waiting, impressed an indelible picture on his mind's eye. Statesmen

and warriors exhibited their venerable heads in vain. All he remembered of the morning's pageant was effulgent with beauty.

"The Duke was looking very well — amazingly better than at the close of last session," observed Sir Herbert, who, though not in parliament, had been a spectator in the gallery.

But, to his surprise, considering the interest he had often heard expressed by his friend in the well-being of the veteran of Waterloo, Reresby replied by an inquiry concerning a lady he had seen taken by his friend to her carriage.

"Who was that beautiful woman in the white velvet dress?"—was his not very apposite answer.

"One whom it is not good for little boys to be acquainted with," replied Sir Herbert, with a provoking smile.

"I was not aware of much difference of age between us," was Reresby's dry rejoinder.

"Oh! *I* am safe," rejoined the Baronet. "As her cousin, I have known her from childhood!"—

"The better your right and title to present your friend," persisted Reresby, resolved not to be affronted.

"It is not right and title, but inclination that is wanting," replied Sir Herbert, as he took from the tray presented to them his goblet of sherry-cobbler and its glass tube, while Reresby primitively adhered to a straw. "Were you to ask me to step to Dinneford's for a bottle of prussic acid, I should say you nay, precisely for the same reason that I refuse to introduce you to Lady Belvedere."

"It *was* then, as I surmised, the beautiful Lady Belvedere!" exclaimed Reresby; and, though his friend was now too busy with the pleasant absorption of his beverage to reply, silence implied assent.

"Reresby, my boy, you are in a fair way to lose your wits!" observed Sir Herbert,

when, at length, after discussing their several tumblers, they renewed their chat; and the new member, as if to disguise his interest in Lady Belvedere, questioned his friend concerning "the beautiful woman in the sapphire brooch,"—"the lovely girl with the white wreath,"—"the pretty creature who had shaken hands with him in the lobby." "But don't fancy I am going to connive in making a Malvolio of you. 'Talkest thou of nothing but ladies?'"

"What else *should* I talk of, seeing that we spent the morning among them?" retorted Mordaunt, smiling.

"Fetch me Dodd's Parliamentary Companion and a pencil, and I fancy I can prove that some fifteen hundred of the male species were collected under the roof of the House of Lords! That you did not perceive them, makes your danger only the more apparent. Seriously, my dear fellow," said he, lowering his voice, and speaking more gravely, "now I

find that you have not, as you used to pretend, left your heart in the country, there is nothing I dread more than to see you caught up, as so many have been before you, by the sails of the windmill of fashion, and whirled out of all means of good to yourself or others."

"No fear!" was the equally earnest reply of his friend. "To-day is a holiday, you know; but, believe me, like the industrious apprentice, I have the best intentions of sticking to the shop!"

"So has almost every man who takes his seat," rejoined Sir Herbert. "But upon *you* it is doubly incumbent.—You have read up to your new duties:—you have been talked up by your father. Instead of being crammed with Horace and Homer, *your* mind has been stored with all that has been said or written concerning prison discipline, pauperism, game-laws, and the various valves through which humane natures are just now emitting their

philanthropy; and your head and heart ought to be nerved for action, like those of a strong swimmer about to plunge into the waves."—

"An indifferent swimmer, I fear—"

"An inexperienced,—which comes to the same thing; for inexperienced swimmers are easily discouraged. And when an enthusiast like yourself discovers how little can be done, and how slowly, in the matter of the great reforms which an enthusiast premeditates as to be accomplished like the light-bringing *fiat lux* of the Creator, he is only too apt to throw up his vocation in disgust."

"What an oaf you seem to take me for!" cried Reresby with some indignation. "Do you really fancy me so vain as to mistake the little pebble in my sling for some 'rock's vast weight,' manœuvred by an Ajax?"

"Nothing of the kind, I assure you. All I fear is, that, once alive to the personal insignificance of every member of that potent body called parliament, which like a barrel

of gunpowder is contemptible in particles and mighty only as a whole, you will allow yourself to glide sullenly with the rest into the current of routine,—perform your duties like an automaton; — and, living among parliamentary men, adopt their jargon, echo their cheers, reckon the sense of the country by the numbers of a division; and because at some prating dinner-party you can prophesy to a vote the issue of the morrow's debate, fancy that you are doing your duty to yourself and your constituents."—

"You expect, in short, that I shall sin by attempting too much, or too little,—that I shall prove myself either a prig or a puppet; whereas, my utmost pretension is to bring zeal and industry to the task of working out the reforms devised by the wisdom of more experienced and influential men. Some day or other, you will see me one of the best committee-men in the House of Commons."

"Which need not, however, prevent your

being one of its best speakers," rejoined Sir Herbert, a little appeased. "Our debating society, I remember, used to predict great things of you; and Trinity was as proud of you as became its gray beard."

"If you had not ventured on a second cobbler, I am not sure that I should forgive your attempt to fool me to the top of my bent by these flatteries," retorted Reresby, shrugging his shoulders.

"To *fool* you? Not I. I am as serious as the Court of Queen's Bench!" cried his friend. "But I don't want you to fool yourself. As one to whom much is given, from *you* much shall be required!—I pass over the question of talent.—I pass over the question of good intent.—I will even suppose, my dear Reresby, for argument-sake, that all men who enter parliament enter it with similar qualifications. But your moral position is exceptional. You enter the House unshackled by antecedents, — unshackled by pledges,—un-

shackled by family connections, the worthless lumber of escutcheons, or the brand of the Heralds' College!—You stand on your own ground: *not* as a friend of the people, (a cry good only for the hustings or to bamboozle hazy constituents at an election-dinner) but as the friend of the country. Never was a man with hands and intellects more completely at his own disposal."—

"And, better still," interrupted Reresby, "backed by the counsels of a practical man, like my father; who has passed his latter years in collating the facts noted in his youth;—and who knows by careful observation the condition of our manufacturing towns and prisons;—things which I conjoin together as cause and effect."

"And possessing these advantages," resumed Sir Herbert, "and being conscious of possessing them, admit that there would be no pardon for you if, for the sake of a few fantastic smiles and pleasant dinner-parties, you allowed

yourself to be caught in the web of an insect, (*passez moi le mot*) like Lady Belvedere."

"Is it my weakness, pray, of which you are afraid,—or the strength of the lady?" said Reresby, a little nettled.

"Of both.—On your arrival in town, last spring, to meet me on my return to England, you disdained all proposal of introductions,—you would not hear of balls,—you scarcely even allowed yourself an opera."

"But not, I assure you, because I fancied such pleasures likely to interfere with graver duties. On the contrary, I hold with the proverb that

> All work and no ploy
> Makes Jock a dull boy."—

"I suspect I understand your motives better than you understand them yourself," rejoined Sir Herbert with a smile. "Your praises of country duplicity, and outcry against the wretched artificiality of London women, betrayed you to be in love with some

rustic Miss; nor, on visiting Deasmarsh, and seeing the damsel in question, was I much surprised to find your passion-flower already out of bloom! Nothing, in fact, but the utter want of something to do, could excuse your having even fancied yourself into an attachment for the parson's daughter."—

"As I live and breathe—" Reresby was earnestly beginning;—but Sir Herbert did not choose to drop the thread of his discourse.

"But as even a paltry camphor-bag," continued he, "acquires value as a preservative from the plague, I would rather you retained the illusion, than that, finding yourself heart-whole, you turned your freedom to bad account."

"To prove to you that I am in no danger"—Reresby was again beginning, with the intention of confiding to his friend the secret of his engagement to Magdalen,—when the recollection of his solemn promise to his father stopped his mouth.

"To prove to you that my danger is not imminent," he again resumed—"know that were you now to offer me an introduction to Lady Belvedere, I should play the Cæsar with you, and refuse the crown."

"Don't be afraid!" cried Sir Herbert, good-humouredly, as both took up their hats for departure. "If, within the next six weeks, I make you acquainted with anything younger or more dangerous than the parchment-cheeked beldames of Settringham Abbey and Melfont Park, to whom you were generous enough to procure me a presentation, I give you leave to elope with a *figurante!*"—

"Pleasant prospects for my début in membership!" said Reresby, as he accompanied him down stairs. "The Emperors of China are required, on the day of their accession, to choose the block of marble that is to form their tomb. But hang me if I see why a new member is to have a parish pall thrown over his head, on the day of taking his seat!"

Sir Herbert, however, was not in the habit of "rising to explain." He had signified his intentions; and abided by them. By the time four and twenty hours had elapsed, however, the "hyperbolical fiend," which had caused poor Reresby to "talk of nothing but ladies," relaxed its influence. The morning brought long and interesting letters from his father; the evening, an important debate arising out of the foreshowings of the address; and profound rumination succeeded to his idle aspirings.

And very soon,—sooner than was expected by either—the ex-parliamentary hours and habits of Sir Herbert began to modify their intimacy. When *one* wanted recreation, *the other* wanted rest. To dine, or walk, or ride together, was often impossible; till by degrees the baronet adhered to companions more at his disposal, leaving Reresby to pair off with the Eton chums who, like himself, constituted a part of the wisdom of the nation,

from knowing when to cry "ay" or "no" at the instigation of his betters.

It is not with male as with female friendships. Men of the world come and go,—and see much or little of each other as they list or as accident drives them, without explanation or apology. Neither one nor other of the twain who had mounted their camels side by side in the desert was, perhaps, aware of the branching in diverse directions of their several paths; till one Saturday night after the opera, when, as Sir Herbert Glynne, while lounging on the grand staircase near the crush-room door, with two or three other men, intent, like himself, on avoiding the *corvée* of carriage-calling for neglected dowagers, he perceived that the happy man on whose arm the beautiful Lady Belvedere swept past them, ruffling her plumes in all the triumphant pride of conquest, was no other than his friend Reresby!—

"Who the deuce has Lady Bel. got hold of

to-night?" inquired Colonel Bedingfield, a sallow guardsman, wearied with the hot rooms of twenty seasons, and living in the midst of temptations which his moderate fortune as a younger brother enabled him only to taste as the children of the poor taste fruit,—when green or mouldy.

"Some *nouveau débarqué*,—I never saw him before!"—replied Lord Richard Lovell, a cornet of the Blues,—in the full bloom of a handsome face and fortune. "Probably some confounded foreigner."—

"No, no! Lady Bel.'s French renders it desirable to steer clear of foreigners!" argued the sneering Colonel.

"I seem to know his face,—surely it is Mordaunt of Trinity?" cried Mark Trevor, Lord Richard's Shadow, as far as the closest mimicry of dress and manner could secure the apehood; though heirship to a Yorkshire Squire and ten thousand a year might have fairly entitled him to invent waistcoats and

slang for his own use.—"Here, Glynne,—my dear fellow!—Glynne!"

But Glynne was leaning over the iron baluster of the staircase, overlooking the soldiers on guard, or the progress of the brilliant couple struggling through the crowd; while cries of "The Countess of Belvedere's carriage stops the way," encouraged them to what appeared to Reresby's inexperience a task as difficult as disgusting. It was in vain that Trevor persisted in plucking him by the sleeve.

"Yes, it *is* Mordaunt!" continued the Shadow, after taking a survey through his own glass, in the same direction.

"And *who*, pray, is Mordaunt!" inquired the Colonel, with the supercilious self-possession of a man whom twenty years' experience of the *pavé* of St. James's Street endows with the imaginary sovereignty of the place.

"A capital fellow,—we were with the same tutor at Eton," replied Trevor.

"But where does he come from?—To whom does he belong?"

"Nothing very particular, I fancy—from Lancashire,—manufacturing interest, or something of that kind,"—said Trevor, with the cowed look of a man acknowledging a discreditable acquaintance.

"Mordaunt?—There was a man of that name returned the other day for some Irish borough,"—observed Lord Richard Lovell.

"*Ours*, for a thousand!—He was just the sort of fellow to get into parliament!" rejoined the Shadow. "Monstrous clever,—a prime favourite with Keate.—Glynne!"—cried he again, on perceiving that Sir Herbert was receding from his post of observation and buttoning his paletot to proceed down stairs,—"*you* used to be Reresby Mordaunt's inseparable. Is it true that he is in parliament?"

"To judge from appearances, I should think he was in Lady Belvedere's carriage,"

replied Sir Herbert, fulfilling his intention of retreat. And as he leisurely crossed Pall Mall on his way to the Travellers', he found himself calculating the number of days that had elapsed since his last interview with Reresby, amounting to little more than a week!—Even in the hotbed of London fashion, (so prompt a ripener of intimacies,) the sudden familiarity between his fair cousin and his dark friend seemed a little premature.

For a moment, he fancied that, as Reresby passed him on the stairs, a smile of triumph had brightened his face,—purporting to say—"what you refused, I have accomplished; and no thanks to *you*!"—But second thoughts satisfied him that his friend was superior to any such vulgar retaliation. Reresby had probably not so much as perceived him. The smile was only such as he had seen, twenty times before, on the faces of those intoxicated by the favour of Lady Belvedere.

"Poor moth!—I must take care that he do

not singe his wings past redemption!"—mused Sir Herbert, as he made his way to the smoking-room. And before he had been many minutes immersed in the fumes of the sacred spot, Reresby was beside him;—not waiting to be questioned concerning Lady Belvedere or making a mystery of the acquaintance; but meeting inquiry half way.

"I sat next her at dinner, on Wednesday, at Lady Mary Grovynor Grovynor's;"—said he, "and to my surprise, found her perfectly *au fait* to my having been the *compagnon de voyage* of her loving cousin."

"Of course. At that time we corresponded."

"Which accounts for the number of old Naples stories to which she alluded; and for her begging me to come and see her the following day."

"And you went?"

"I left a card. It was not worth while to go in; Cad Rowlandson having fastened him-

self on my arm, who talks for two, and would have reduced me to a cipher. But on the strength of a very gracious bow to-night, I visited her opera-box, and was requested to stay and take her out."

"I could have sworn it!"—

"My dear Glynne, you do me honour!"

"Less perhaps than you think for. You are just the novice for such a woman to seize upon as a spur!"—

"A *spur?*—I was afraid you fancied me booked for a *bridle!*" cried Reresby, with a grimace at the vileness of his own pun.

"I mean that you are the very man for Lady Bel. to put forward with the hope of re-animating Fauconberg's drooping affections."

"Fauconberg?—a *beau ténébreux*,—dark, handsome and silent,—whom I found sitting in her box to-night?"—

"And who probably left it soon after you became the object of her coquetries?—Yes! Fauconberg is dark and handsome; and when harassed by Lady Bel.'s persecutions, silent.

But he talks enough at the proper time and place."—

"And what *is* his time and place?"—

"Already a duel in view!"—

"Pho, pho, pho!"—

"His place is the House of Lords, and his time whenever a question of real moment is in debate."

"You don't mean to say," cried Reresby with sudden energy, "that *he* is the Lord Fauconberg who—"

"Precisely!—The Lord Fauconberg who spoke so finely on the Irish Coercion Bill the other night."

"That heavy supercilious-looking fellow!" —Who would have dreamed it!"

"You are still young enough, then, to expect pictures to correspond with the flowery descriptions contained in an auctioneer's catalogue?"—

"I thought my own presentiments more to be trusted."

"No one's presentiments are to be trusted!

If Fauconberg, for instance, ever heard of you before to-night, he probably expected to see a provincial swell, a man full of pretensions and *rengorgé* with bank-notes. Whereas, if he had not thought you an individual worthy his best impertinence, (which he seldom throws away on anything not a member of White's,) he would have made himself less disagreeable."—

Sir Herbert did not appear aware that his own address at that moment was to the last degree impertinent. Luckily, the conversation was interrupted by the cutting-in of Mr. Settringham; who, after muzzing away the evening at the conversazione of some Hieroglyphic Association, valued only from adding its initials to his name, made his appearance so overbrimming with learning, as to require a whole decanter of iced water towards slaking the dryness of his dust.

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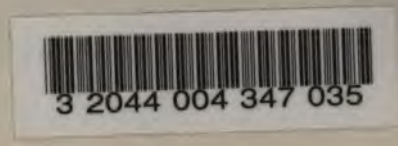

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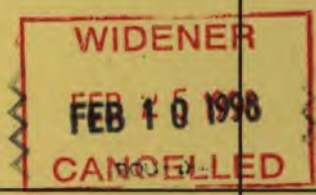
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